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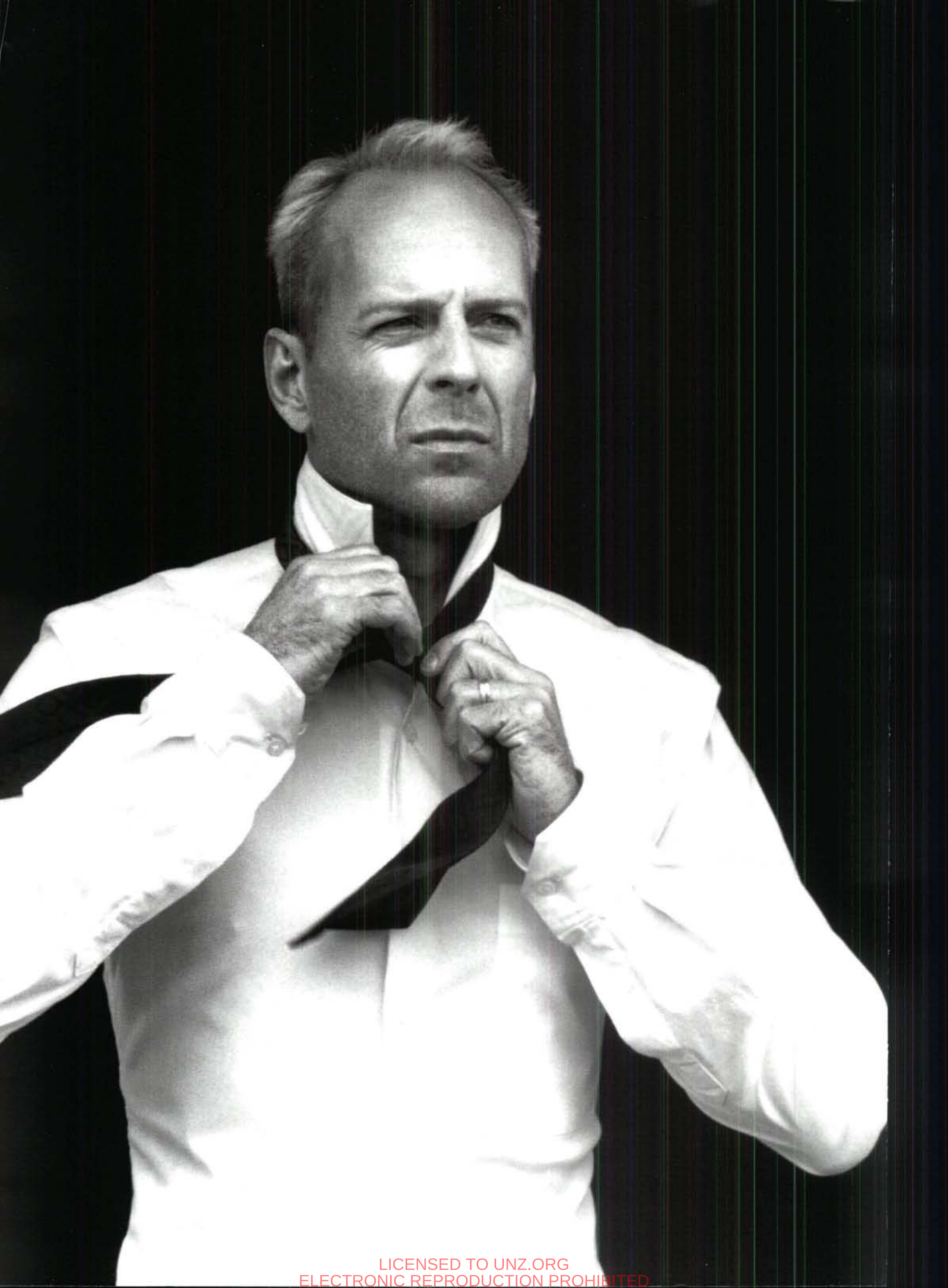

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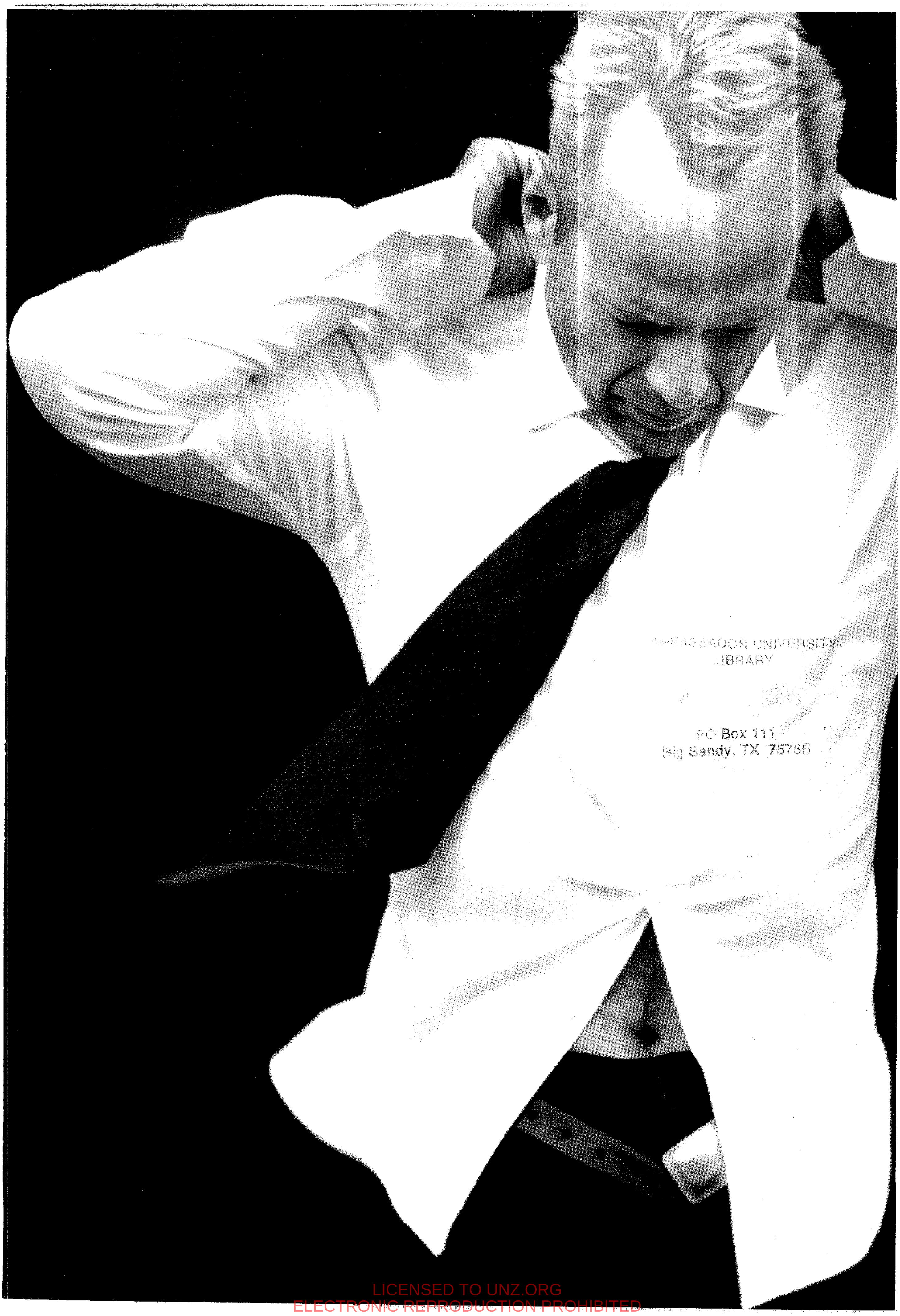

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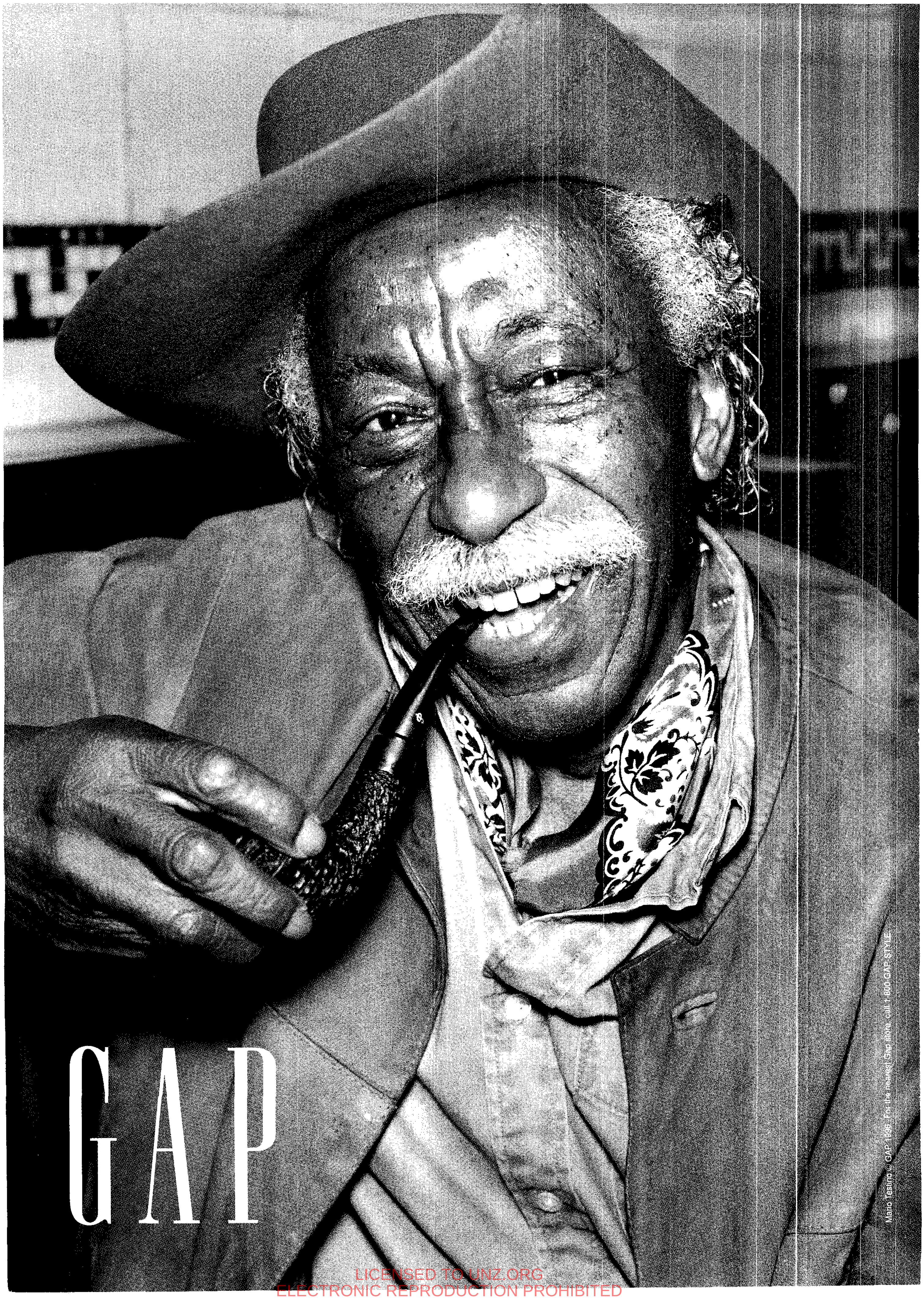

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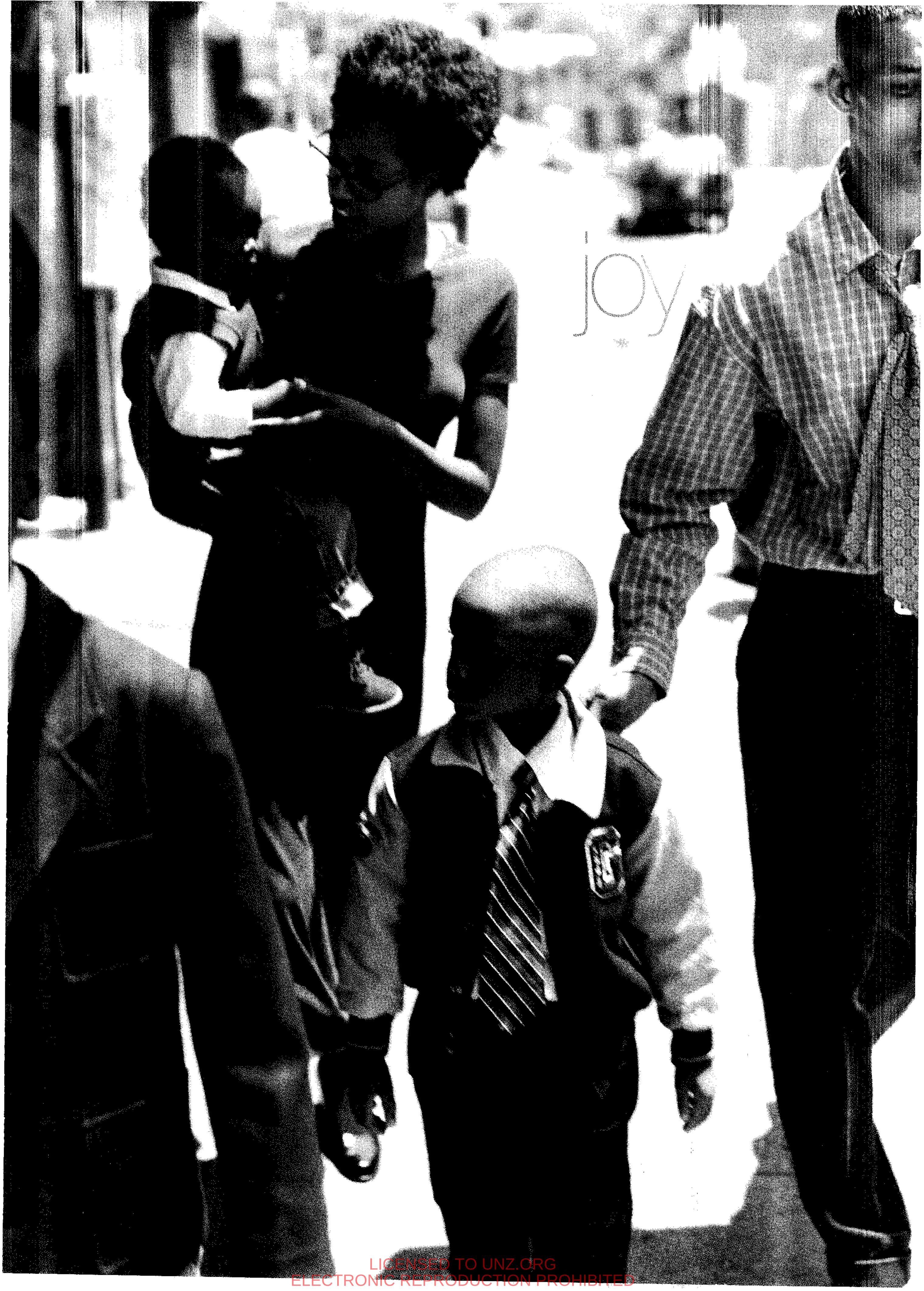
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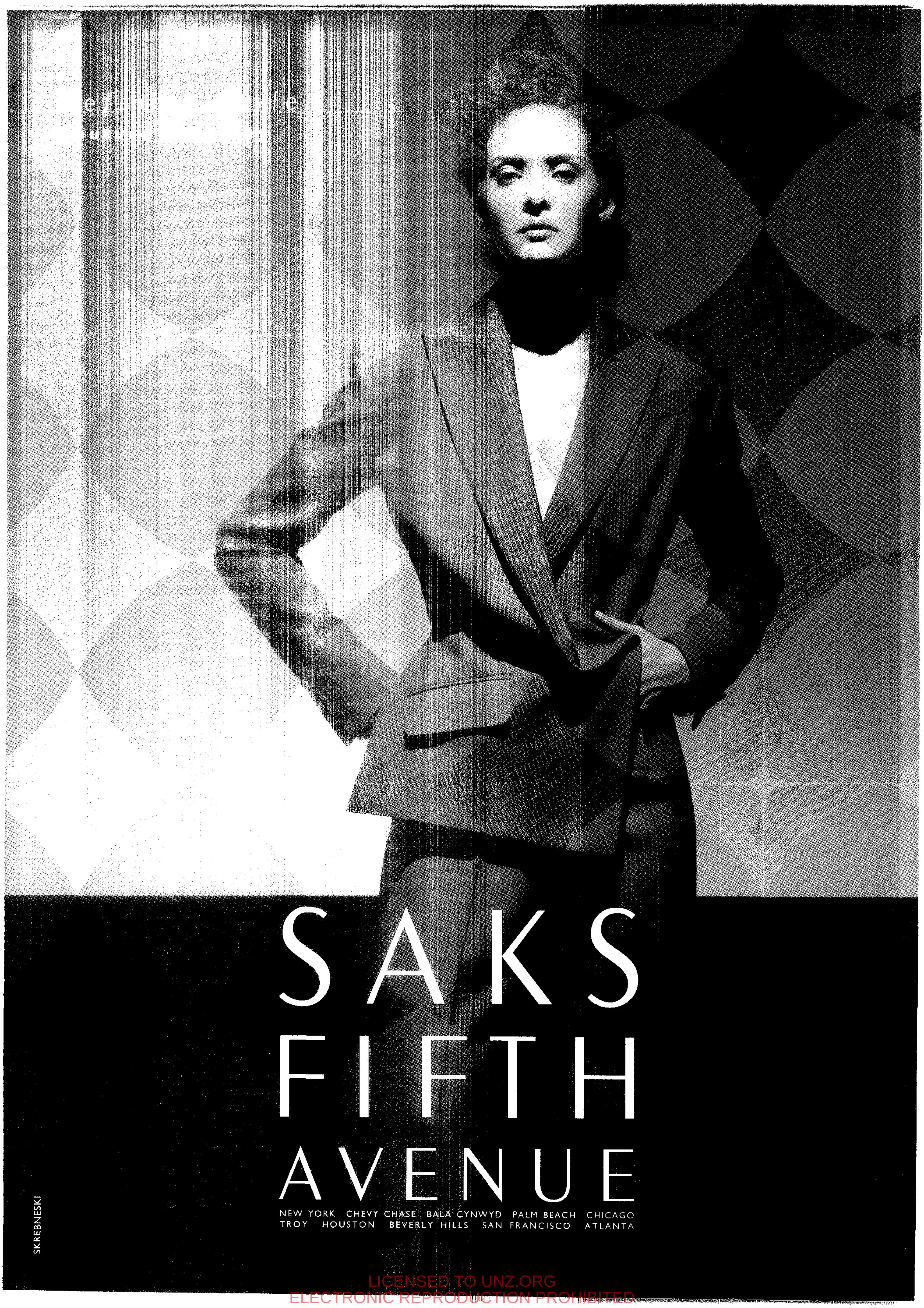
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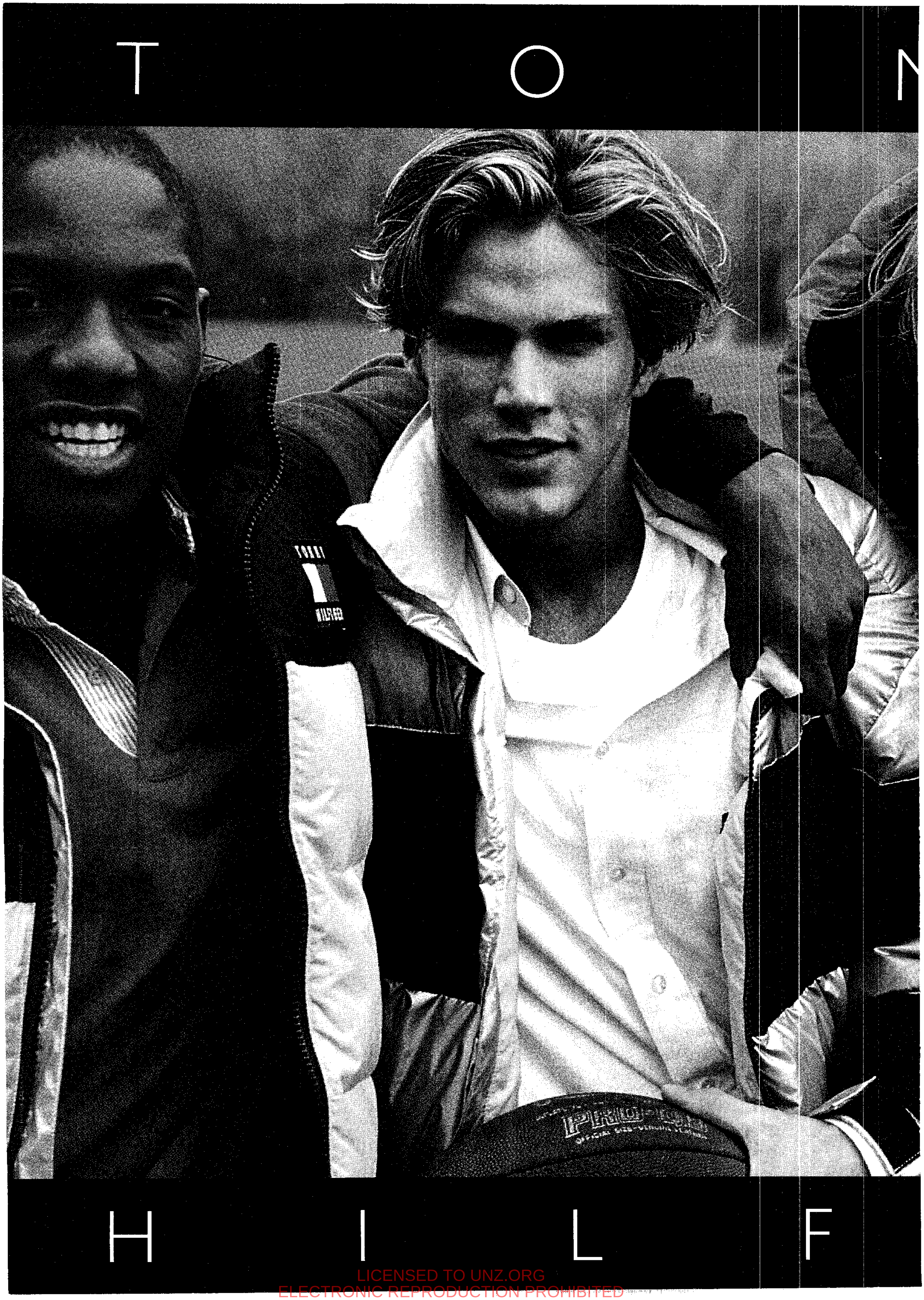
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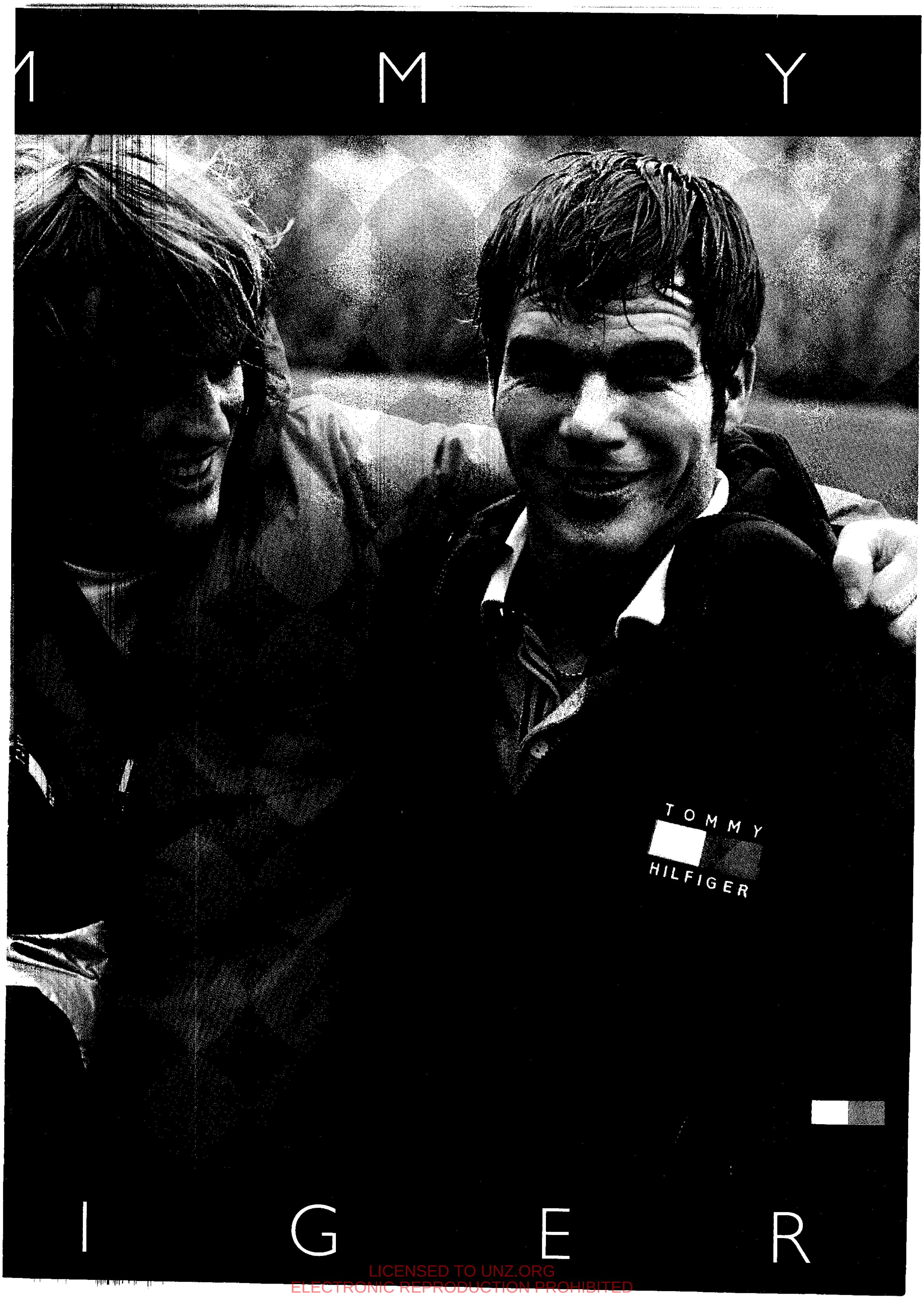
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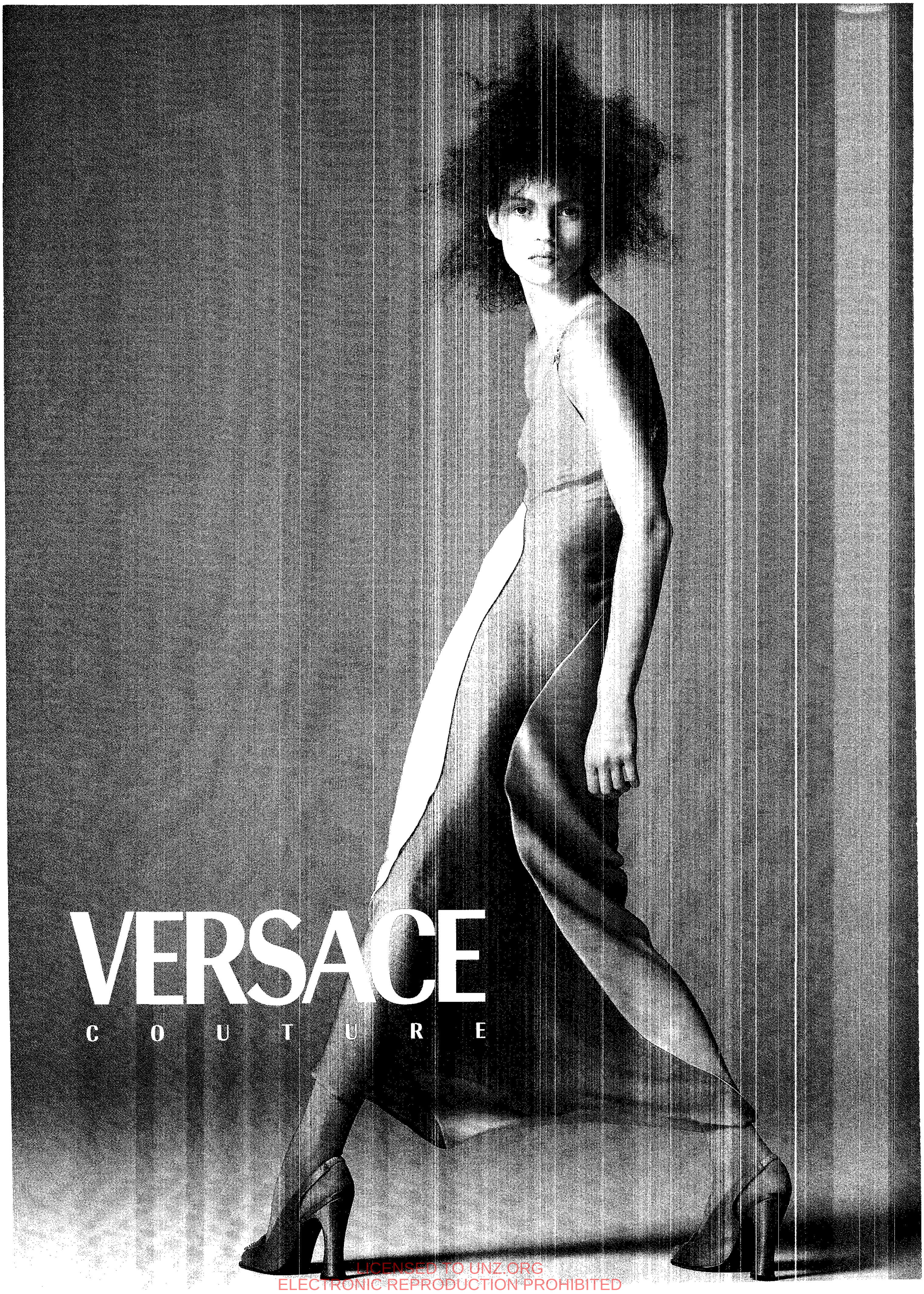
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COMMENT

THE MUSICAL KALEIDOSCOPE

Together at last: Schubert and Pearl Jam.

SOMETHING odd occurs toward the end of "Odelay," a new album by the young artist known simply as Beck. As happens with so much music these days, the record weaves together scraps from here and there: rap, rock, funk, jazz, folk, significant traces of Bob Dylan. The second-to-last song on the disk, "High 5 (Rock the Catskills)," goes a step further: just past the one-minute mark, Beck's edgy white-boy rap abruptly dissolves into a foreign sound that turns out to be, of all things, Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony. Dissonant chords make a strangely natural segue out of the rough rap texture before the symphony's B-minor theme offers its mournful strain. Bursts of white noise signal a return to the twentieth century, but the ear has been spooked.

What does it mean, this classical cameo on the hip youth album of the hour? Consider it a sign of these unusually turbulent musical times. Turning the dial or browsing in record stores, you encounter a teeming mass of genres, hybrid forms, unnamed styles. Nowadays, new sounds are multiplying in crazy profusion, fending off—or feeding off—one another. The culturally empowered members of the so-called Generation X—those teen-agers and twenty-somethings whose taste dominates the market—cheerfully undermine assumptions about what sorts of things they ought to like. Their tastes are refreshingly muddled, and their mode of listening is restless. Recently, Soundgarden has found itself sharing the charts with Tony Bennett and the Spanish monks who intone Gregorian chant. Those who were considered young only a moment ago are having to decipher cryptic new phenomena devised by the even younger: "trip-hop," "isolationism," and, a few weeks ago, something identified in *The Village Voice* as "illbient."

A few centuries back, the philosopher and sometime opera composer Jean-Jacques Rousseau could write confidently of a "general taste upon which all well-educated people are agreed." Shakespeare employed the word "music" with blissful vagueness: "If music be the food of love, play on." He had no need to specify "bel canto," "zydeco," or "dub." Today's splintering of genres has done heavy damage to that old hierarchical division between "highbrow" and "lowbrow." All styles under the sun are clamoring to be taken seriously, freighted, as they are, with heavy investments of ethnicity, ideology, tradition, and ex-

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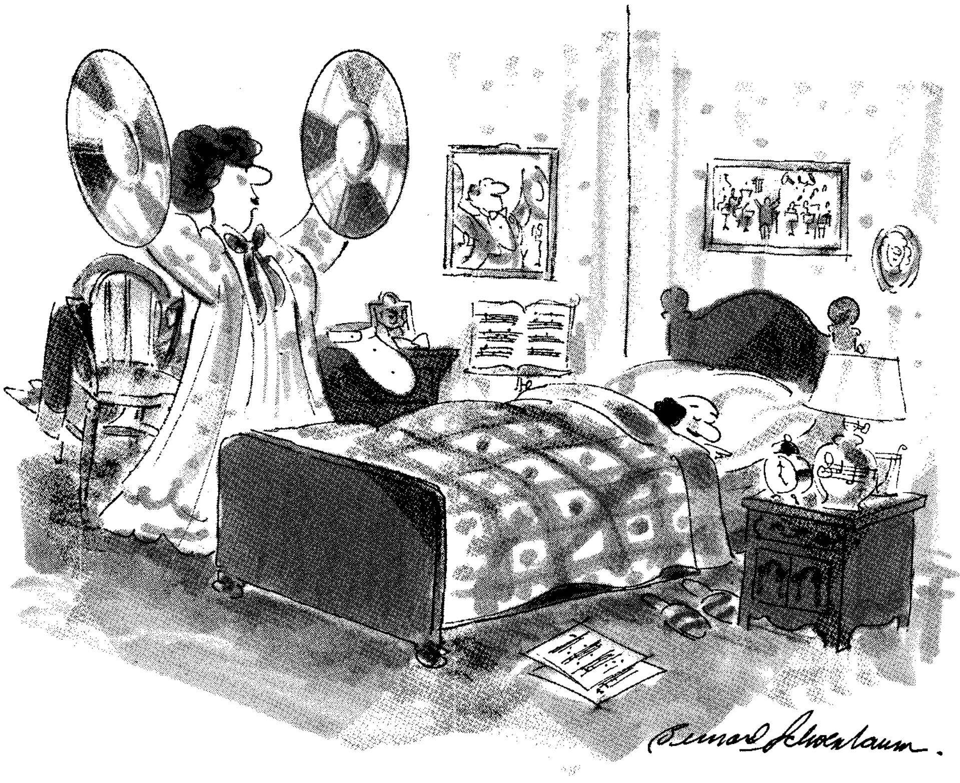


pertise. You may offend by dismissing them, or you may offend by embracing them. Along with other forms of identity politics, musical taste has become tense.

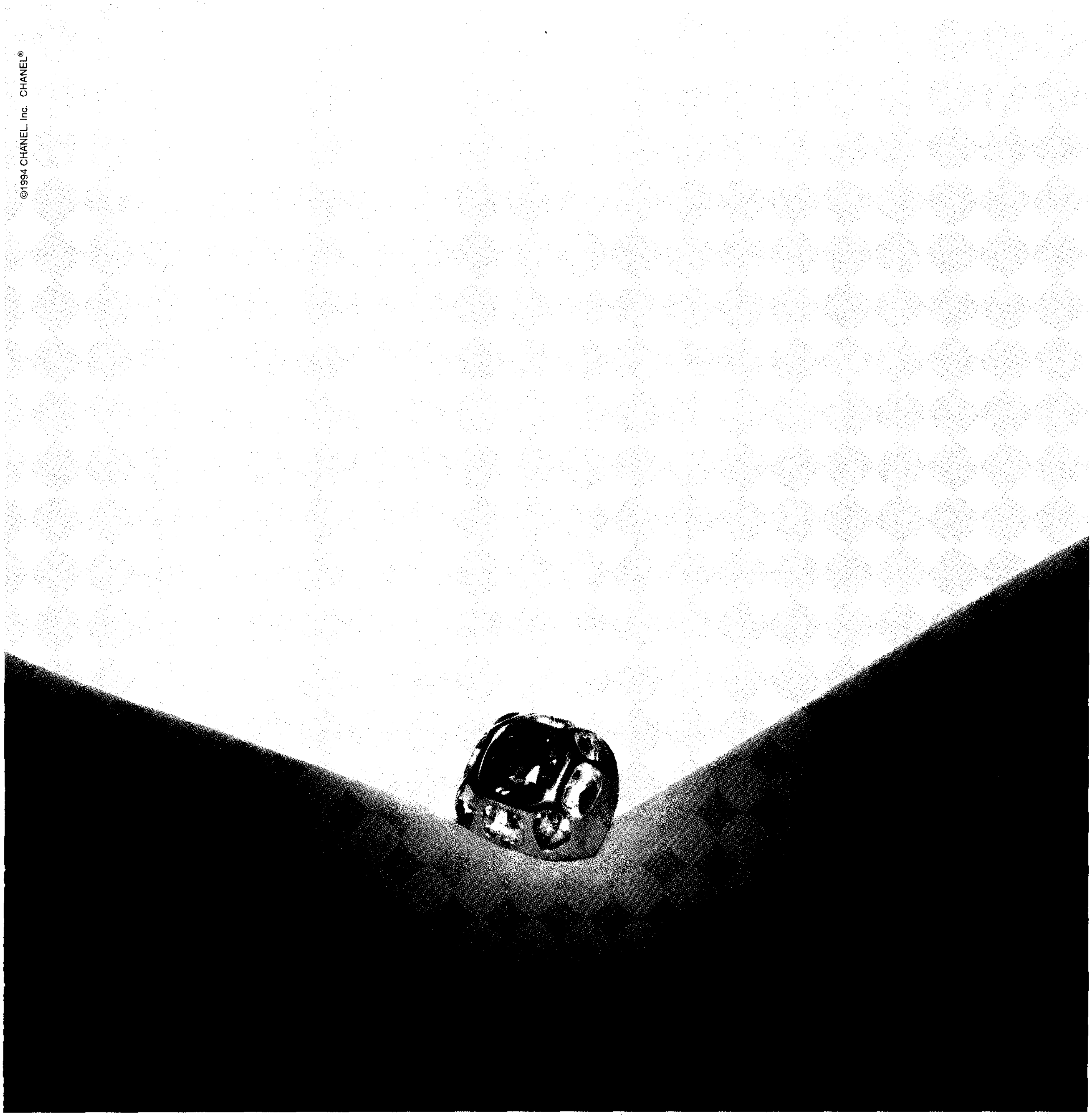
MUSICAL taste is much talked about but seldom thought about in depth. Some useful illumination arrives from the ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin, in his fearsomely entitled but remarkably lucid treatise "Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West." Slobin proposes the existence of a "superculture"—a vast, neutral mass-media zone in which a myriad "subcultures" bid for stardom, entrench themselves in opposition, or fuse. He describes just how intricately music blends into the world of the individual. For every listener, music can be, at different times, an act of solitary eccentricity, a surrender to mass spectacle, a declaration of group solidarity, and a cross-cultural migration (as in the passion of white suburban kids for rap). In a multicultural society, music is a way both of finding oneself and of pledging allegiance to a like-minded crowd.

Not all forms of music are faring equally well, however. Western classical music, notably, has had a hard time maintaining its balance in this kaleidoscopic culture. For centuries, it comprised the entire superculture: it had no name; it was Music. Folk songs, dances, and religious music disappeared into its fabric. At some point during the lifetime of Richard Wagner, classical music overstepped the mark and turned megalomaniacal. Precisely because it advertised itself as universal, superior, and difficult, it stumbled badly in the new democratic marketplace. Jazz became the dominant form in the nineteen-thirties and forties; rather quicker on its feet, it made a vibrant alliance with Tin Pan Alley while acquiring intellectual cachet by way of bebop. Then all genres had to bow before rock and roll, with its promise of global sexual and political liberation. But this revolution soon split apart as the more creative elements of punk and alternative rock renounced commercial values. Now nothing holds the center, and subcultures run amok.

A fall from grace leads inevitably to churlish squabbling. Musical conservatives line up to proclaim that the great traditions are in danger. They bewail the marginal popularity of Stravinsky or Thelonious Monk or Cole Porter relative to the celebrity of Pearl Jam. Even the Beatles are now praised in terms reserved for beleaguered classics: "They're so much subtler and richer than what you hear today!" On the other side are the progressives, who believe that tradition must evolve, adapt, mate with sexier sounds. Certain young classical composers are laying down funky beats with bass clarinets and naming pieces "Spud," "Yo Shakespeare," and "Grungy." Meanwhile, fanatical separatists sound the call of stylistic purity, of "authenticity." There are weird parallels between devotees of early music and fans of hardcore punk, notably in the cry of "Sellout!" which goes up when a favorite bit of esoterica unexpectedly hits the big time (those best-selling Benedictine monks, the happy punk of Green Day).

It's understandable, this atmosphere of crisis that looms over such well-worn, long-cherished genres as classical music and jazz. A culture obsessed with youth, novelty, and gadgetry won't easily embrace a music that requires close listening or historical understanding. On the other hand, the composer-trumpeter Wynton Marsalis is proving that an immensely sophisticated tradition can reclaim a portion of the spotlight if it displays a modicum of media savvy and a friendliness toward neighboring traditions. Leonard Bernstein achieved the same thing for classical music with his irresistible television programs for children and adults in the fifties and sixties. What distinguishes great advocates like Marsalis and Bernstein is a passionate belief in the particular meaning—not the general superiority—of the music they love best.

Maybe the greatest danger is not that any one tradition will die out but that the media conglomerates who manage so much of our culture will demand ever more gimmicky fusions of separate traditions. It's the curse of Wagner all over again, the oppressive dream of a Total Work of Art. Perhaps the wisest thing ever said about the business of making music in a polyglot society came from the eighteenth-century American hymnodist William Billings: "Every composer should be his own Carver." From Billings on, the best American music has been carved out of a multitude of voices—some as inclusive as Duke Ellington's or Lou Harrison's, others as aloof and eccentric as Morton Feldman's or the Velvet Underground's. The all-American messiness of contemporary taste is something to be savored. Don't try to make sense of it; lean forward and listen. —ALEX ROSS



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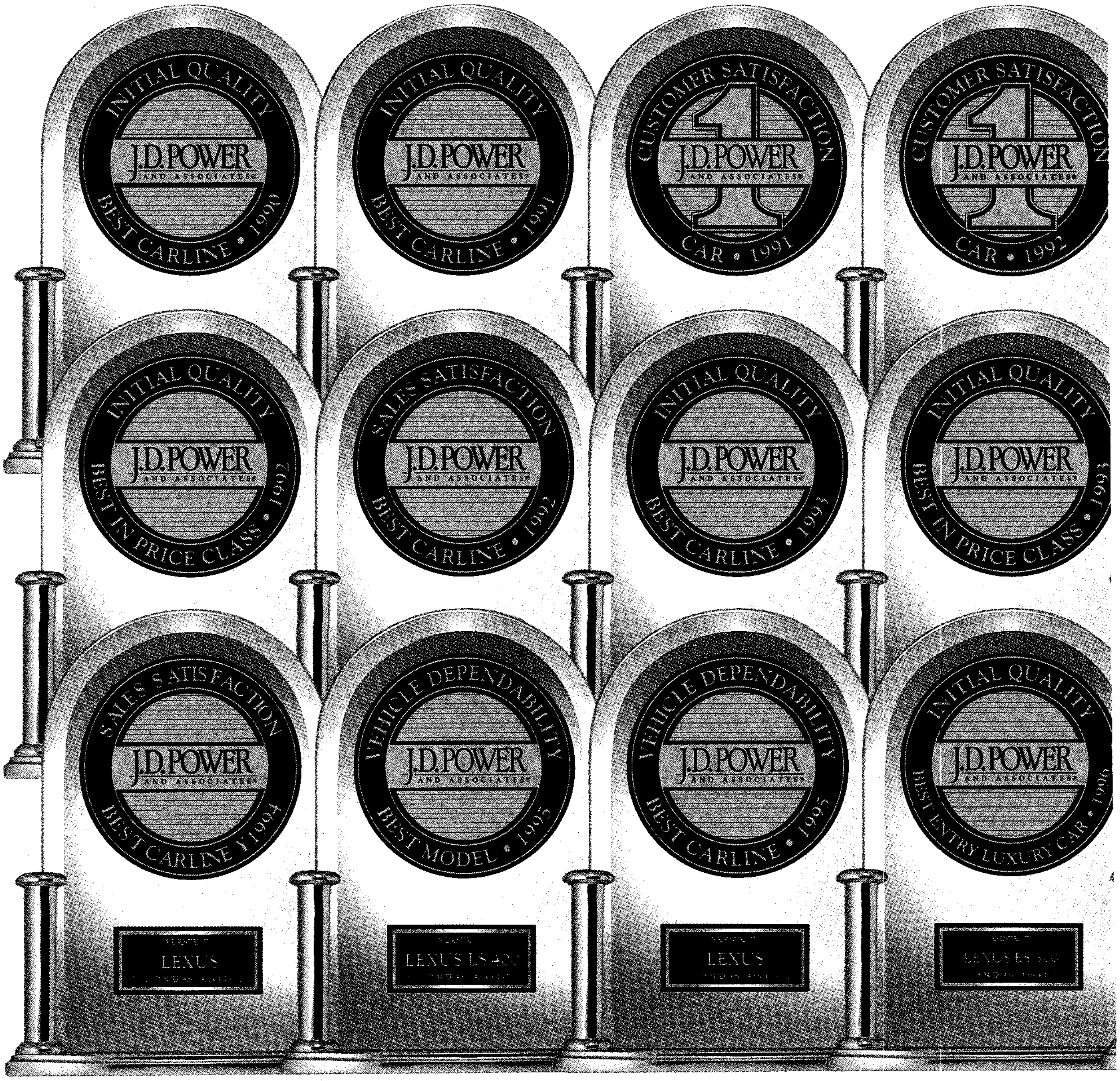
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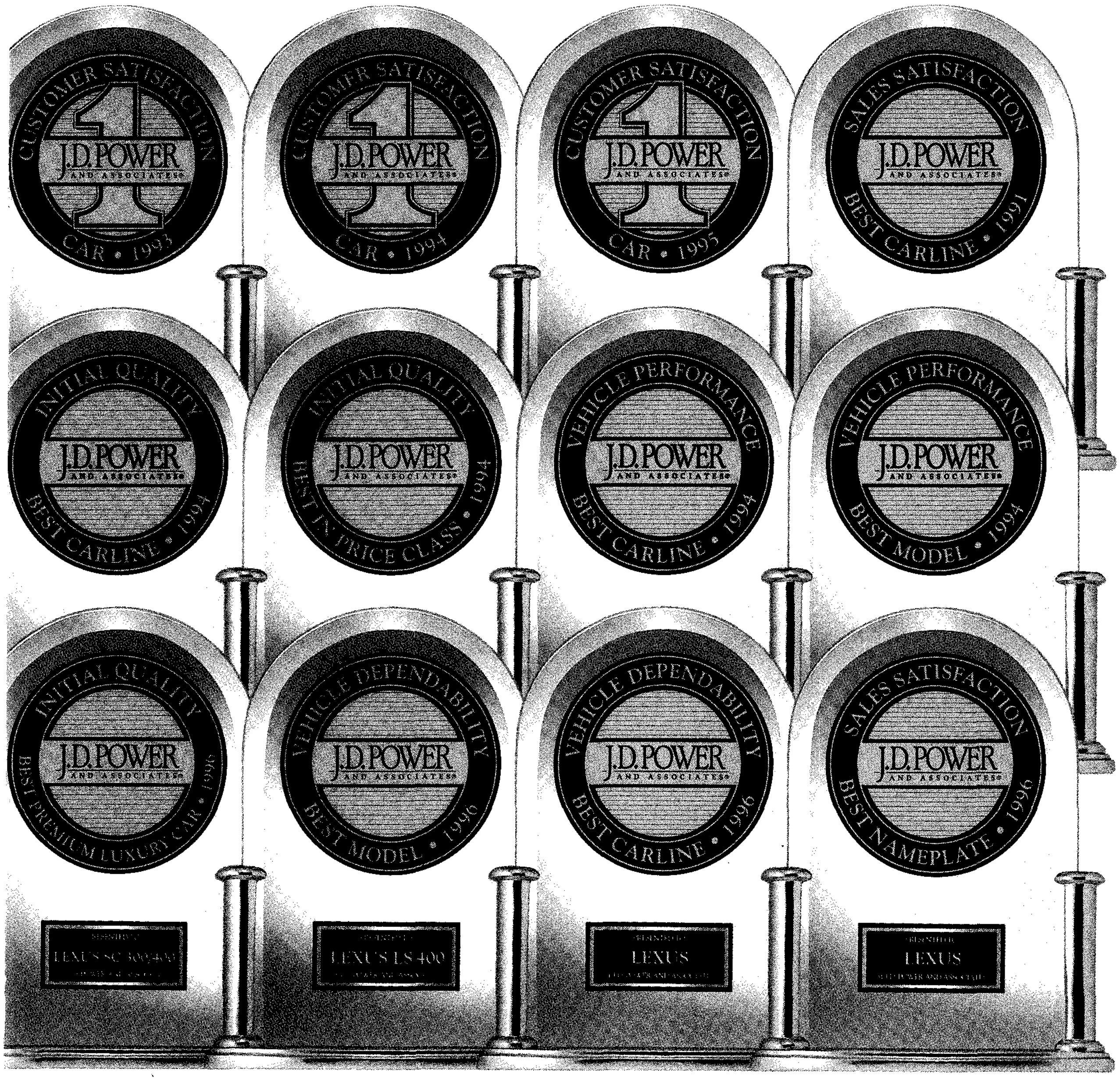
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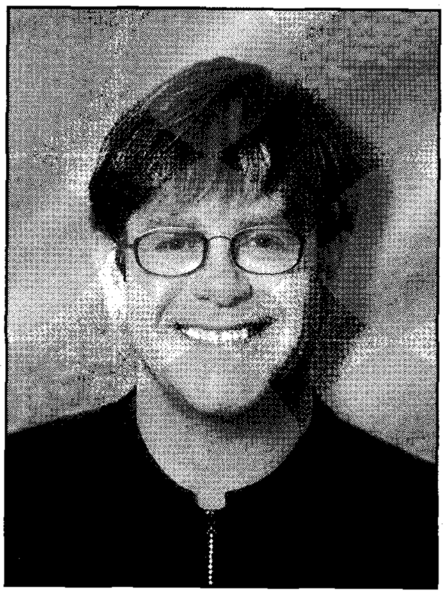

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OLYMPIC FINALE

Alexander Stille, in "Who Burned Atlanta?" (July 29th), criticizes the city for neglecting its past because of its "relentlessly commercial attitude." But he also describes Atlanta as being "obsessed with its history." Though Stille successfully taps into the unresolved tension between past and present which remains prevalent throughout the South, he cannot have it both ways. He praises Savannah for "having chosen historic preservation over economic growth," but if every city in the South made Savannah's choice the region would be sure to remain economically stagnant and lost in a fog of devotion to history. I argue that Atlanta does not neglect the memories of its past—it has simply given more consideration to its future.

CHRISTOPHER SWANN
Columbia, Mo.

I was stunned by William Joyce's July 22nd cover ("Too Busy City"), showing a hayseed holding aloft the Olympic torch while surrounded by chickens. The drawing would be offensive even if, as Joyce implies, Atlanta were an all-white rural community; the fact that it's not only heightens the absurdity. Roger Angell (Comment, July 22nd) should have added to his list of Olympic ironies the trend among broad-minded journalists and editors to take ignorant potshots at Southern culture. Bigotry is wrong whether it is touted by politically powerless relics like the K.K.K. or paraded on the cover of a highly influential liberal magazine.

PATRICK BRYANT
Atlanta, Ga.

NBC's coverage of the 1996 Olympics was certainly deplorable—all that gossip about the athletes, the endless gloating over every failure and misfortune, the excluding from view of non-American medal winners, etc. But I thought it was just plain old yellow journalism, in the best tradition of William Randolph Hearst. Now I learn from David Remnick ("Inside-Out Olympics," August 5th) that the boys over at NBC's head office are just trying their hardest to give us women what we want—they're burning the midnight oil to keep up with the latest scientific findings on the answer to Freud's famous question. So what might appear to an untrained observer like me to be cheap sentiment and counterfeit emotion is actually an attempt to create an atmosphere of inclusion and relatedness. Now, isn't that just the sweetest thing?

NORA M. DARC
Bowie, Md.

The analysts at NBC ignored an obvious reason that women might actually enjoy watching Olympic sports: It is still a thrill for women to see other women running fast, jumping high, and throwing a ball. Only in the last decade have we been able to view muscular women, from around the world, pushing themselves to the limits of their physical endurance. On television, one can see up close the intense eyes, the conditioned bodies, and the determination of these athletes. With no narrative at all, such pictures speak to women of new freedoms won, old barriers dropped, and wonderful possibilities for themselves and their daughters.

ANN SINGER
Berkeley, Calif.

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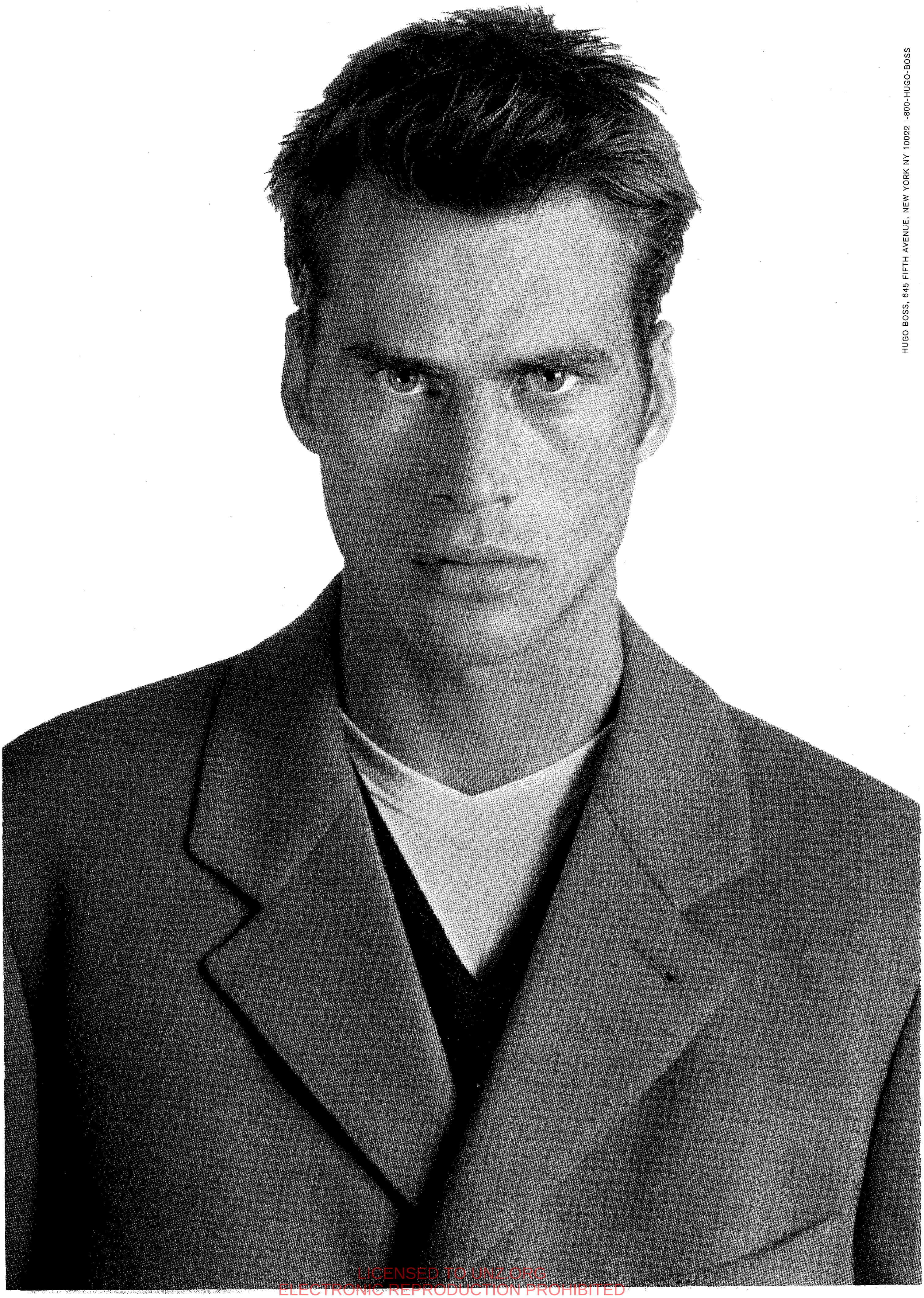

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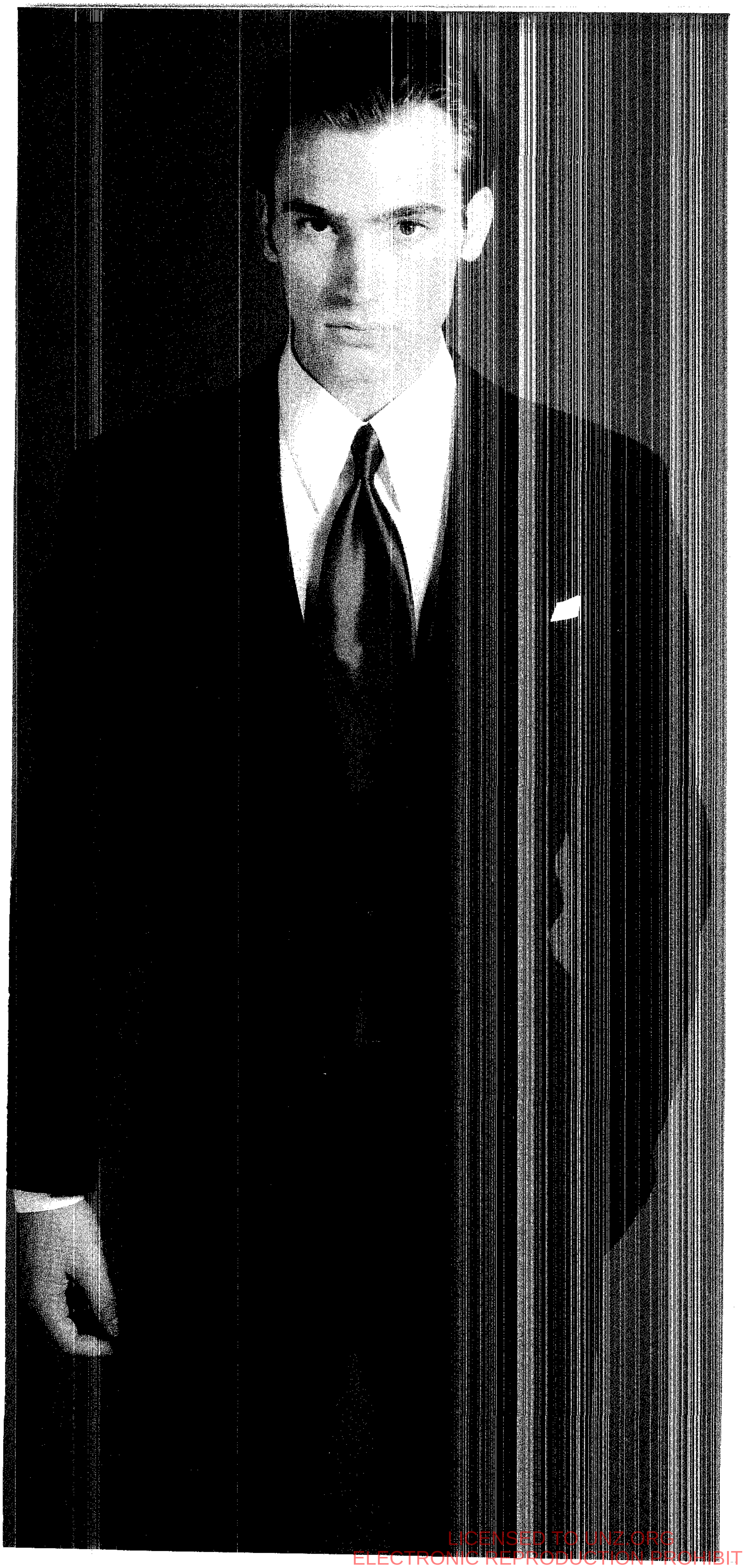

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Disappearing Act—A new revue about gay life in the city, by Michael Oster. Previews begin Aug. 26. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Gravel's Spine—Punk-cowboy musician Mojo Nixon portrays a snake-handling evangelist, in a new play by Mary McBride. Opens Aug. 21 at 8 and continues through Aug. 31. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Hughie—Al Pacino stars as the blowhard gambler Erie Smith, in his own staging of Eugene O'Neill's 1941 drama. Preview on Aug. 21. Opens Aug. 22 at 8 and continues through Sept. 15. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Old Wicked Songs—Jon Marans' play, which had its première last November at Playhouse 91, about a jaded young pianist studying in Vienna (Justin Kirk) and the older Viennese music professor (Hal Robinson) who transforms his outlook. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Summer and Smoke—Mary McDonnell portrays the lonely spinster Alma Winemiller and Harry Hamlin the man she loves, in the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of Tennessee Williams's 1948 drama. In previews. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Two Gentlemen of Verona—A King's County Shakespeare Company staging. Performances are preceded by a Renaissance carnival, which starts at 7:15. Preview on Aug. 22. Opens Aug. 23 at 8 and continues through Sept. 1. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Brooklyn. For more information, call 726-2359.)

What the Butler Saw—Jean Cocteau Repertory presents Joe Orton's 1969 satire, directed by Scott Shattuck. Previews Aug. 23-24. Opens Aug. 25 at 3. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Big—This adaptation of the movie that starred Tom Hanks provides little joy, though Daniel Jenkins, as the twelve-year-old in a grown-up's body, is sweet and likable. Directed by Mike Ockrent. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/27/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Born to Sing!—This spinoff of the long-running gospel musical "Mama, I Want to Sing!" chronicles the increasingly chaotic world tour of gospel diva Doris Winter and the New York Reach Ensemble; the plot isn't compelling, and the acting isn't consistently good enough to make a difference. But that hardly matters, since the point, as in "Mama," is the music, and the music is glorious. All four of the main performers (Tanya Blount, Kellie D. Evans, Lisa Fischer, and Stacy Francis) have strong (and distinctly different) voices. Singing both standards and original songs, and backed by the impossibly energetic and gracious music minister, Charles Stewart, and the choir, they give the show the backbone it needs. You couldn't find a better introduction to gospel without going to church. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

The Boys in the Band—James Lecesne, as the swishy Emory, and David Greenspan, as the lethal Harold, have a field day in Mart Crowley's 1968 study of gay self-hatred. The script no longer seems particularly shocking (except in its viciousness) or politically suspect, but it holds up soundly in this impressive revival, which was supervised by the playwright and directed with buckets of bile by Kenneth Elliott. The WPA Theatre production has reopened at the Lucille Lortel. (121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Bring In da Noise, Bring In da Funk—In director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover's heroically energetic musical, the extraordinary Glover and his sensational group of young tap dancers and street drummers bring joy. They bring fury. They bring history and ecstasy. (5/20/96) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's production of the Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical (which starred the Marx Brothers in 1925). (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Cowgirls—An appealing, if somewhat predictable, musical comedy, in which three chamber musicians are transformed into fringe-wearin', honky-tonkin' cowgirls. Mary Murfitt, the show's composer and lyricist, and Betsy Howie, who wrote the book, are part of the fine cast. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Da—In the Irish playwright Hugh Leonard's 1978 memory play, the middle-aged Charlie (Ciaran O'Reilly) reconsiders his tangled relationship with his recently deceased father (Brian Murray), who continues to banter with him from the beyond. Murray gives a typically wonderful performance as the title character, whose blithe approach to life has led both his wife (Aideen O'Kelly) and his son to blame him for their own disappointments. Charlotte Moore's assured staging doesn't shy away from the sorrow in Leonard's comedy, and the other members of the first-rate cast shift effortlessly between the past and the present. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

A Delicate Balance—A bracing, astringent revival of Edward Albee's 1966 play about a family that has sacrificed much of its humanity for the sake of appearances. The cast, under the fine direction of Gerald Gutierrez, is uniformly excellent. (5/27/96) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Forbidden Hollywood—Gerard Alessandrini's hit-and-miss movie-biz sendup. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. Closes Sept. 1.)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum—Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbart, and Stephen Sondheim's 1962 musical-comedy version of a Roman farce is a joke play that begs for outrageousness. But Jerry Zaks's peppy, acrylic revival, with Nathan Lane in the role of Pseudolus, seldom enters that giddy zone of comic daring. (5/20/96) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Grace & Glorie—Tom Ziegler's predictable but charmingly told tale of an illiterate Virginia mountain woman (Estelle Parsons) and the Harvard M.B.A. (Lucie Arnaz) who befriends her in her last days. Under Gloria Muzio's direction, the two actresses make the blend of humor and pathos affecting rather than—as it might easily have been—cloying. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-9393.)

Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—A cast of five performs more than fifteen musical numbers in a new revue conceived by lyricist and director Mark Waldrop and the late costume designer Howard Crabtree. Music by Dick Gallagher. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

An Ideal Husband—In Oscar Wilde's hundred-and-one-year-old play, a youthful transgression comes back to threaten the career of a promising Cabinet member. The man who saves the day is played, with showy aplomb, by Martin Shaw. The rest of the delightful, mostly British cast, under the direction of Peter Hall, is well up to the Wildean wit and wisdom, and the evening flies by in a flash of epigrammatic splendor. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

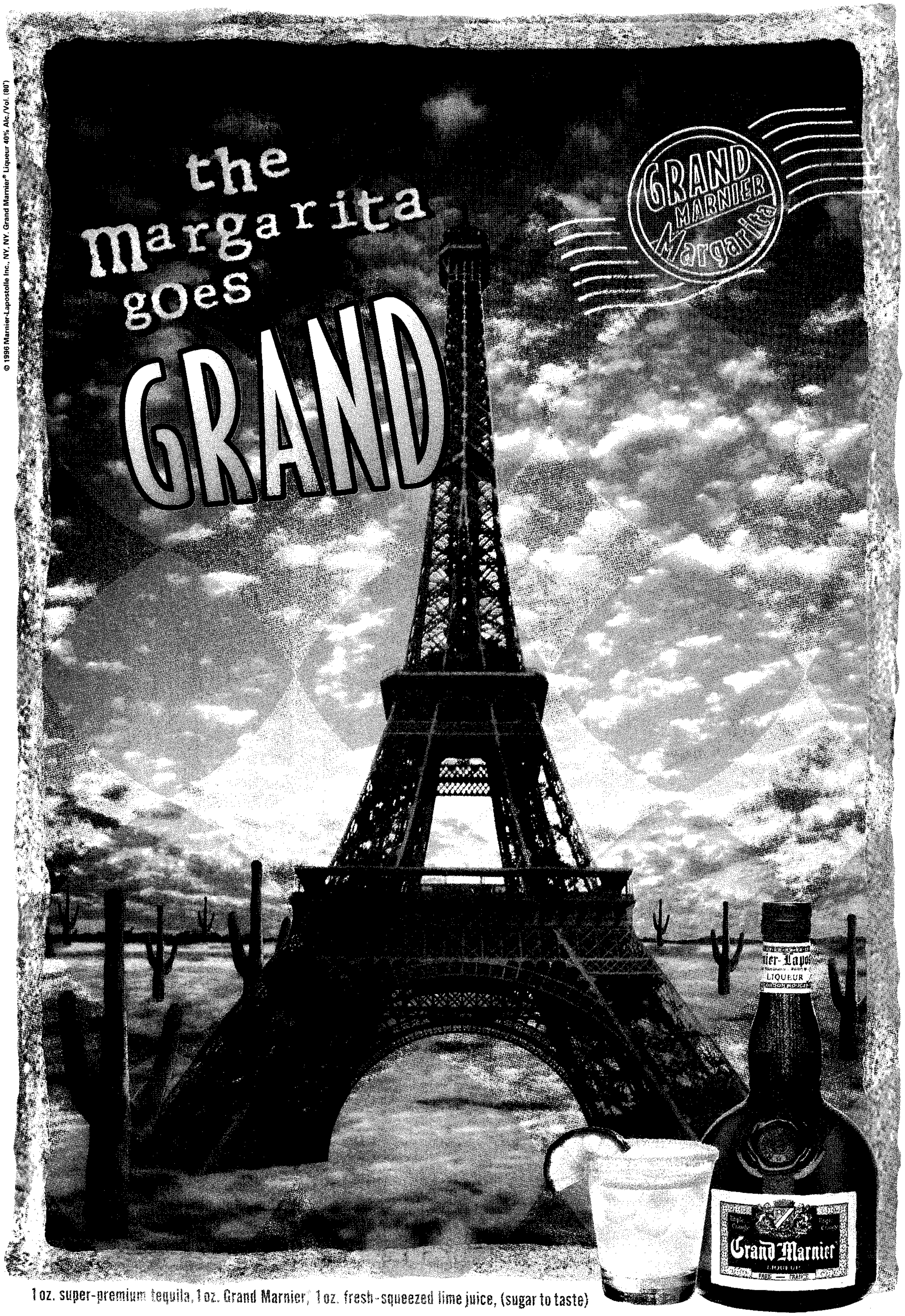
I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining such made-for-musical-theatre issues as parents who talk baby talk, the injustice of long ladies'-room lines, the gruesomeness of bridesmaids' dresses, and the unbearable triteness of shopping. Couples in the audience may nudge each other happily as they guess the actors' lines before they're uttered. Directed by Joel Bishoff. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Keats—Austin Pendleton, in a one-man drama set during the young poet's final days in Rome, where he died of tuberculosis in 1821. (Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 925-8645. Closes Aug. 31.)

The King and I—In a word, magnificent. Hats off to Donna Murphy, as Anna, Lou Diamond Phillips, as the King of Siam, and everyone else (including Rodgers and Hammerstein, of course) who had a hand in this production. Christopher Renshaw directed. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Love Thy Neighbor—In his latest two-hour monologue, Jackie Mason prowls the stage like a rabid penguin, parcelling out tough love with equal-opportunity glee. His range may be limited, but his timing is perfect, and the house rocks with laughter. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

O Wholly Night and Other Jewish Solecisms—A new one-woman play written and performed by Deb Margolin, in which a woman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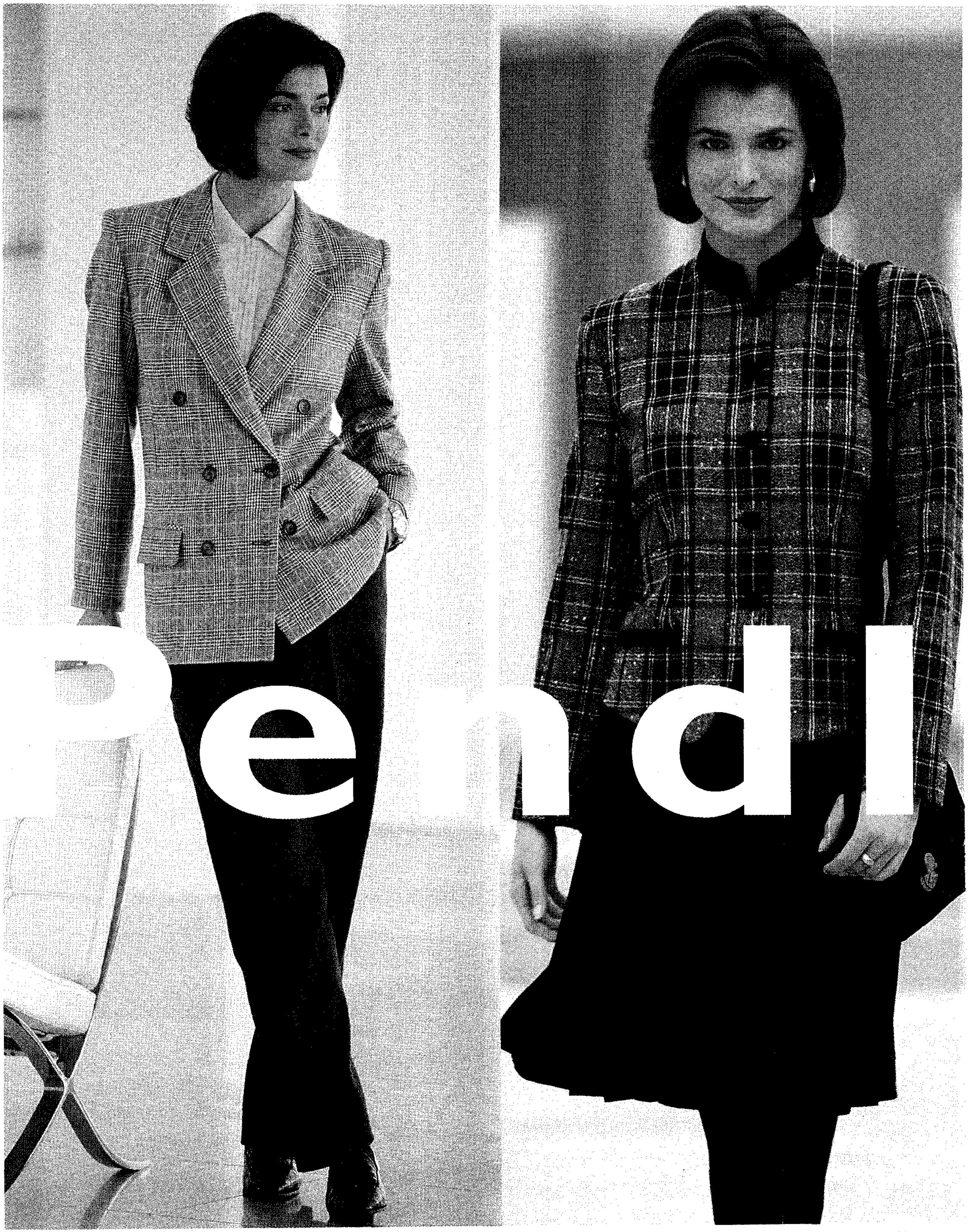
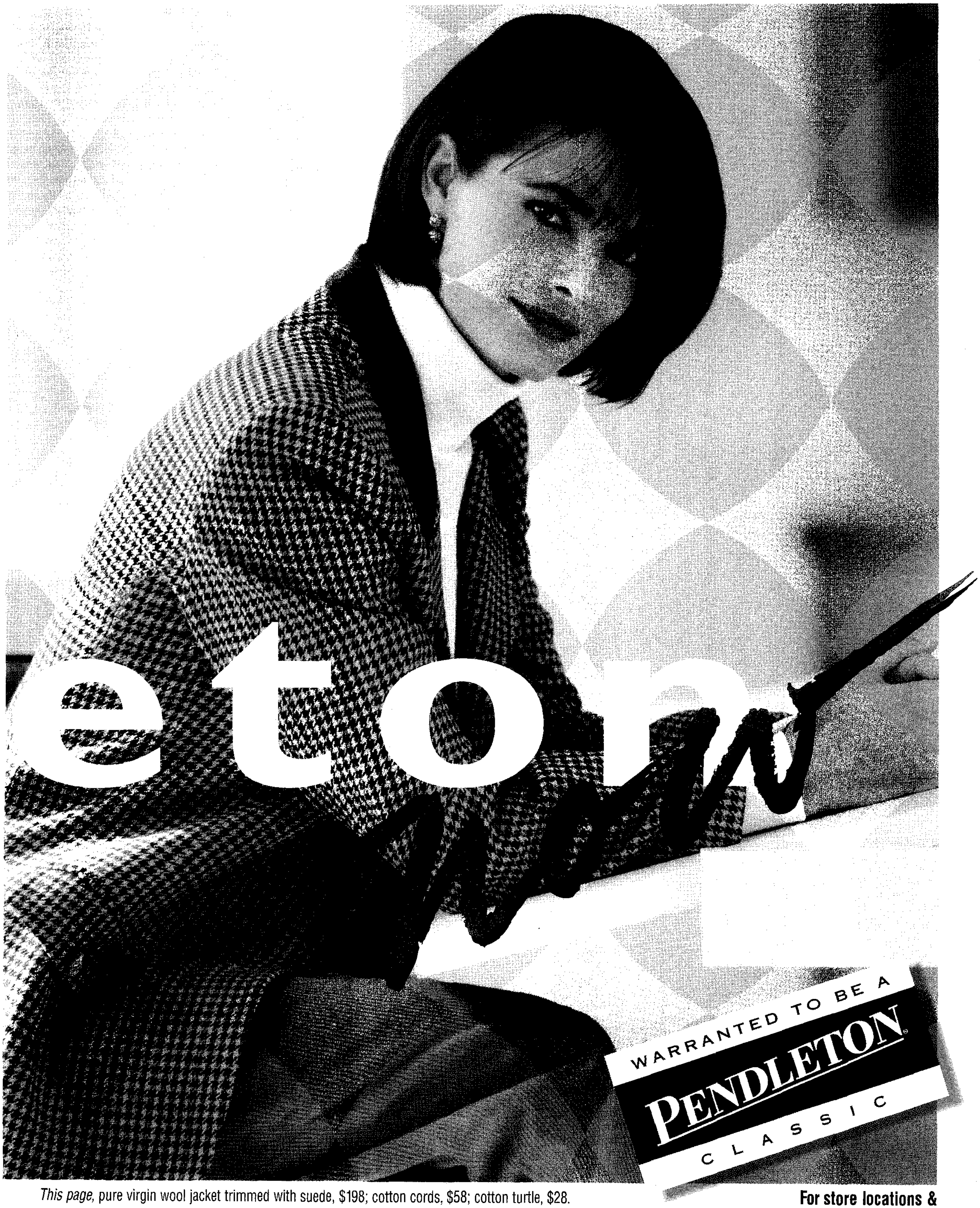


This page left, double-breasted blazer, $208; trouser, $114; both in pure virgin wool; pleated shirt in washable poly/rayon, $74. *Misses, Petite, Plus & Tall Sizes. Middle,* jacket in Black Stewart, $198; *Misses, Petite, Plus*; skirt, $88, *Misses, Petite;* both in pure virgin wool.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not unlike the playwright awaits the Messiah. Directed by Margot Lewitin. (Interart, 549 W. 52nd St. 279-4200.)

Phaedra—In his new one-person show, Everett Quinton, of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, plays a gum-chewing waitress in a Greek diner who starts out helping a high-school kid with his homework and ends up taking on all the roles in the tragic soap opera recalled in the title. But although Quinton cuts a striking figure, with his bald head and combat-fatigues gown, his frantic pace suggests that he's trying to make up in sweat what he lacks in art. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 307-4100.)

Possible Worlds—Arthur Aulisi gives an earnest but not altogether convincing performance as a man fated to love the same woman (Kathryn Langwell) as he goes through multiple lives, in John Mighton's science-fiction mystery about a rash of crimes in which people are being murdered for their brains. The problem with the play is not just that it's too heavy on the science and too light on the mystery but that it tries to make a love story out of what is essentially an intellectual exercise. (Mighton is a doctoral candidate in mathematics.) The best efforts of the cast may make you think, but they won't make you feel. An Adobe Theatre Company production. (46 Walker St. 560-7387. Closes Sept. 7.)

Rent—The late Jonathan Larson's rock opera, inspired by Puccini's "La Bohème," stands every assumption of the traditional musical on its head. It can't support the narrative overload (eight separate stories are told), yet by the end of the evening Larson's talent has taken the audience to places the musical never ventures these days. Directed by Michael Greif. (2/19/96) (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.)

Seven Guitars—August Wilson's exciting new play flashes back to the final days of a Pittsburgh blues singer (Keith David). The seven guitars of the title are the seven memorable characters whose high times and dashed dreams Wilson turns into beautiful, complex music—a funky, wailing, irresistible Chicago blues. Lloyd Richards is the director. (4/15/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 7.)

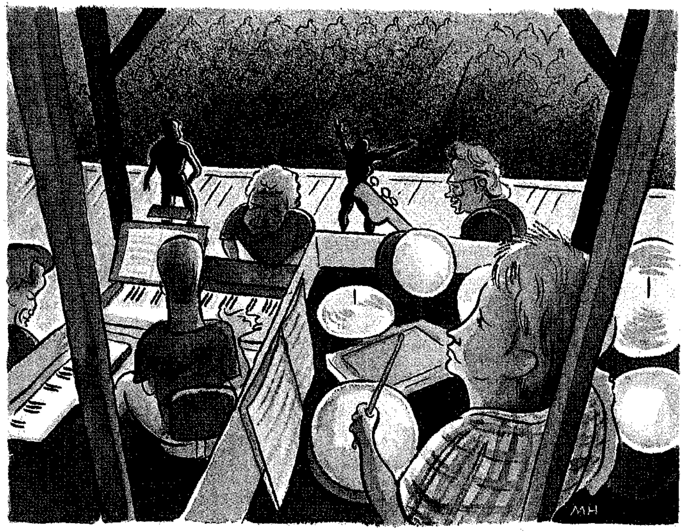
Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You—Christopher Durang's 1979 comedy, starring Geraldine Librandi and directed by Mark Cannistraro. Saturdays at 8, through Aug. 31. (Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. S. 255-5438.)

Timon of Athens—One of the Bard's lesser plays, probably unfinished: an uneasy mix of comedy and tragedy with a startlingly uncomplicated plot and theme (in short, both profligacy and greed will get you in the end), but also with intriguing echoes of his greatest writing. The director, Brian Kulick, does as well as he can with the odd script; the evening gets off to a slow start, yet the humor is so broadly and genially played that you can't help but laugh. Michael Cumpsty, as Timon, is strong enough to pull off the transition to tragedy in Act Two, and he is matched by a superb supporting cast, particularly Henry Stram, as his steward, and Geoffrey Owens, as a greedy Athenian. And (unusually for the Delacorte) Mark Wendland's set is strikingly effective—cumbersome, but worth the trouble. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750. Closes Sept. 1.)

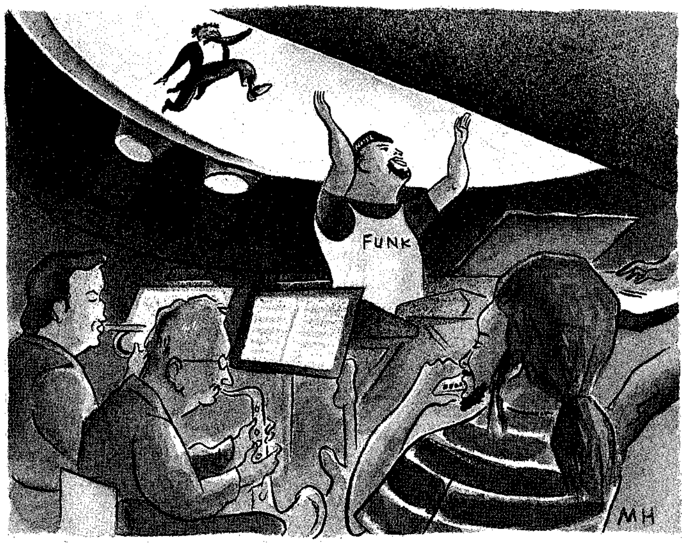
Valley of the Dolls—Theatre-a-Go-Go, from Los Angeles, offers a stage adaptation of the film adaptation of Jacqueline Susann's novel. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 14.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.



A couple of Broadway bands: musicians from "Rent" . . .



and from "Bring In da Noise, Bring In da Funk."

MARCELLUS HALL

DANCE

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—Aug. 21 at 6: The flamenco dance company La Conja Mimbre y Vareta. (Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 6: The Anna Sokolow Players' Project. (Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 8:15: Elisa Monte Dance, in "Labess" and "Feu Follet—A Cajun Love Story." (Damrosch Park.) . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 5:30: Soundance, with, among others, Chris DC Ramos and Heidi Latsky. (Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 27-28 at 7: Choreographer Paula Josa-Jones's "Ghostdance," performed by her company and dancers from Monterrey, Mexico. (Damrosch Park.) . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 6: Ballet Bougarabou, of Senegal, in "Black Pearls," with readings from the novel that inspired the dance, by its author, Eric Copage. (Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 8:15: Martha Graham Dance Ensemble. (Damrosch Park.) . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 5: Lula Washington Dance Theatre, in "Watts Memories." (Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 5:30: Indrani, in classical Indian dance. (Fountain Plaza. For more information, call 875-5108.)

"Body of Work"—The Everett Dance Theatre, from Providence, Rhode Island, opens Dance Theatre Workshop's fall season with a fast-paced ode to labor. To create the eighty-minute piece, the eight-member company reviewed motion studies of workers from the early industrial revolution, visited New England textile mills, and talked with factory laborers, including laid-off men and women in North Adams, Massachusetts, who saw their idle Sprague Electric plant become the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Aug. 28-31 at 8. Through Sept. 7.)

"Folktale"—Three solos for masked mythic figures (a trickster, a maiden, and a crone) underpin an evening-length work by the Eight Lives Dance Collective about shifting identities. (Context, 28 Avenue A, at 2nd St. For reservations, call 1-718 729-5313. Aug. 22-25 at 8.)

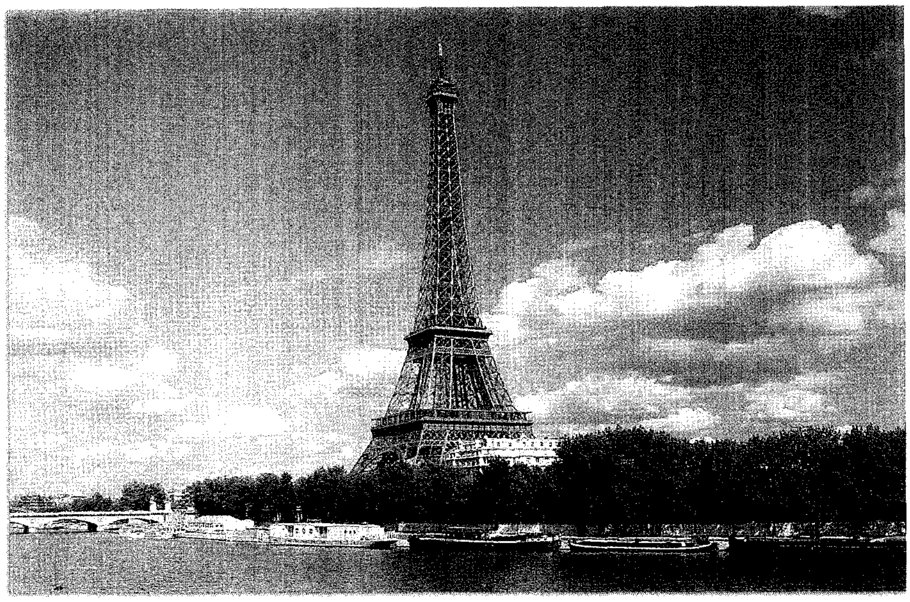
Urban Artworks IV—A sextet of companies presents a summer harvest of dances, including "Garden Party," by Mary Bruce Blackburn, "Goldfish Variations," by Diane Vivona, and "The Closet," by Maxine Steinman. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. For reservations, call 924-0077. Aug. 23-24 at 8 and Aug. 25 at 3.)

Pilar Rioja—This commanding figure in traditional Spanish dance appears in her twenty-fourth New York season. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Aug. 21 and Aug. 27-28 at 7; Aug. 22-24 and Aug. 29-31 at 8; and Aug. 25 and Sept. 1-2 at 3.)

"Freiheit Makes a Stand"—Choreographer Clare Maxwell and theatre director Barry Rowell of the Peculiar Works Project take one of Shakespeare's high-body-count tragedies, "Coriolanus," as the template for an exploration of the militia movement. (Vineyard's 26th Street Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 529-3626, ext. 100. Aug. 22-24 and Aug. 29-31 at 8 and Aug. 25 and Sept. 1 at 5.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—Aug. 20 and Aug. 25 at 7 and Aug. 22-23 at 8: Cleo Parker Robinson Dance. . . . ¶ Aug. 20-23 at 8:30 and Aug. 24 at 2 and 8:30: Feld Ballets/NY. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 7: Gail Gilbert. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 243-0745.)



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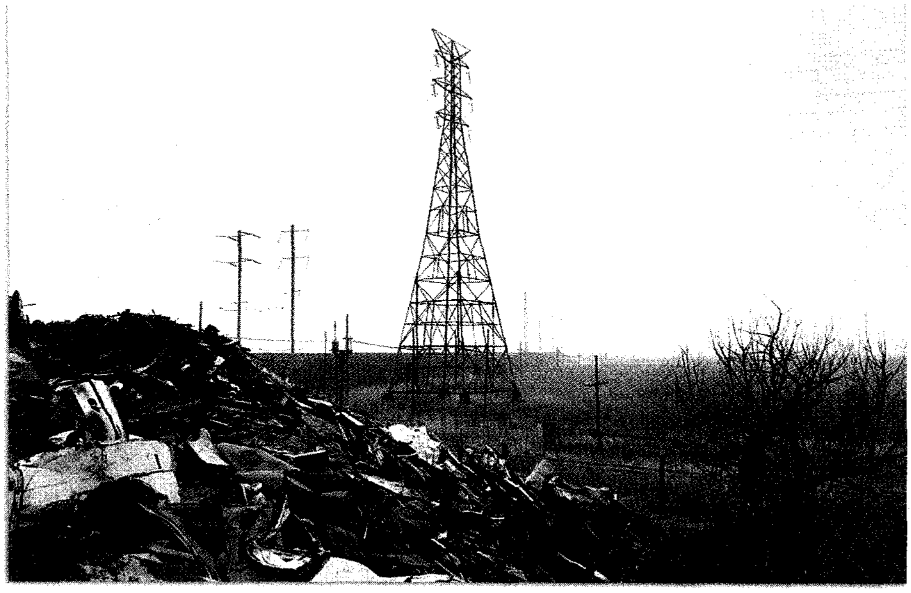

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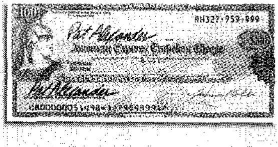

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan—Regarded by some as the world's greatest living singer, and certainly the king of the world-music scene, Ali Khan—practitioner of the Sufi devotional vocal art known as *qawwali*, which literally means "utterance"—is a mountain of a man who performs with his ten-piece "party," all of whom play sitting down. And a party it is. As the band churns out a burbling harmonium-and-tabla drone, the singer unleashes a torrent of melisma and ululation which seems to come from another world. Then, as the music grows louder and his ecstatic, serpentine phrases soar, he reaches a hand to the heavens, and a shower of dollar bills rains down on the stage from the audience. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Aug. 21 at 8.)

Jimmie Dale Gilmore—Blistering country-flavored rock. With the Scud Mountain Boys, who play rural rock that's nearly as cool as their name. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Aug. 21 at 8.)

Melissa Etheridge—While this raspy-voiced rock singer's Bryan Adams approach is hardly cutting-edge, her latest album, "Your Little Secret," is probably her best, and she does her arena-rousing thing with verve and conviction, giving boys and girls alike a reason to shout. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. Aug. 21 and 23 at 8.)

"Reggae Madness"—With Maxi Priest, Shabba Ranks, and Shaggy. (Radio City Music Hall. Aug. 22 at 8.)

Sonny Burgess / Rosie Flores / Sleepy LaBeef—Although he's been eclipsed by some of his Sun Records stablemates, Burgess's "Higher" still turns up on any respectable rockabilly compilation. And the man—wafer thin and well in control of his Fender Telecaster—continues to make the rounds when he's not recording with the venerable Sun studio band. A great opportunity to see a down-home rockabilly hero up close. / Flores has a voice that, like Gram Parsons', cracks in all the right places. This mean, guitar-toting San Antonio rose has long been the darling of the Austin and L.A. country circuits. Her eponymous 1987 début, which featured the classic "God May Forgive You (But I Won't)," was a keeper, and her followup, "Once More with Feeling," is none too shabby, either. / LaBeef is an Arkansas boy who is reputed to know six thousand songs; his sets are always full of surprises. (Lincoln Center Bandshell. No tickets necessary. Aug. 23 at 8.)

Beach Boys—God only knows how many times during the past thirty years even their staunchest supporters have anticipated the big wipe-out, but the quintessential California pop band is now entering its fourth decade. Former leader Brian Wilson's emotional troubles and drummer Dennis Wilson's death by (of all things) drowning would have carried most bands out to sea. But with eternal party animal Mike Love cheerleading audiences through the band's countless hits, and baby brother Carl Wilson onstage to preserve and protect Brian's musical legacy, the Beach Boys should still be able to generate a mess of good vibrations. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 24 at 8.)

White Zombie / Pantera—They look like they just crashed through the screen at a showing of "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome." They sound like it, too. The band's recent album, "Astro-Creep: 2,000 Songs of Love, Destruction and Other Synthetic Delusions of the Electric Head," picks up right where its 1992 shock-rocking predecessor, "La Sexorcisto: Devil Music, Volume 1," left off. The musical carnage is as unrelenting as an "Evil Dead" marathon—and almost as much twisted fun. / "Far Beyond Driven," the last release by these self-proclaimed "cowboys from hell," was once the No. 1 record in the country—a success that probably has a lot to do with singer Philip Anselmo's trademark "guttural spews," which, we would wager, are best appreciated from a distance. Live, the boys promise to "crush at your ears like a vice [*sic*]." (Meadowlands Arena. 307-7171. Aug. 24 at 8.)

Charlie Parker Jazz Festival—Downtown was never hipper than in the early fifties, when Parker was a proud resident of the area. This annual free concert honoring the once and future king of bop features a particularly noteworthy lineup: saxophonists Marty Ehrlich and Joe Lovano, drummer Max Roach, and the Jimmy Heath Big Band. (Tompkins Square Park. No tickets necessary. Aug. 25 at 3.)

Tori Amos—One of pop's more eccentric performers, this classically trained piano prodigy turned spandex vixen débuted in 1991 with "Little Earthquakes," a critically acclaimed mixture of baroque keyboard work and oozing sexuality. On the cover of her latest record, "Boys for Pele" (dedicated to a volcano goddess who swallows men whole), she's pictured breast-feeding a pig. Onstage, as on disk, she may be over the top, but she's rarely a bore. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 25 at 8.)

Neil Young / Jewel—In the five years since he last toured with Crazy Horse—the lumbering, magnificent garage band he's been working with on and off since 1968—Young has indulged his chameleon tendencies by making a sequel to his 1972 hit, "Harvest," doing "MTV Unplugged," recording a Kurt Cobain tribute with Crazy Horse and a Jim Jarmusch soundtrack, and playing with Pearl Jam and Booker T. and the MGs. (He's also been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.) Add his new album with Crazy Horse, "Broken Arrow," to the list, and there will be plenty of fresh material for Crazy Neil and the Young Horse to blast through in all its ragged, proto-grunge glory. "Broken Arrow" has three or four great new songs (and a few forgettable toss-offs); Young still has a near-miraculous talent for staying a step ahead of his golden-oldies ghost. / Jewel is a remarkable young singer-songwriter who grew up on an eight-hundred-acre farm in Alaska and who honors her mountain roots by finishing her shows with Olympic-calibre yodelling; she also used to date Sean Penn. She has almost single-handedly returned folk to stadium-size popularity. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 26 at 8.)

Beck / Cibo Matto—Some seven years ago, an eighteen-year-old Beck Hansen stepped off a Greyhound bus and headed straight for the Lower East Side; he's come a long way. Back then, the Angeleno high-school dropout was already reconfiguring folk with punk attitude and X-Acto-knife wit. These days, most people know him as that slacker dude who sings "I'm a loser, baby, so why don't you kill me?," but he's no slacker, and no loser, either. One seriously funky white boy, he deconstructs folk, punk, rock, and hip-hop, with startling results. "Odelay," his near-genius followup to "Mellow Gold," has more of a hip-hop vibe than his past efforts. It's also got a killer single, "Devil's Haircut," which may just wipe "Loser" off the map and get rid of that pesky one-hit-wonder tag. / The Japanese duo Cibo Matto churns out kitschy broken-English raps about food ("Beef Jerky," "White Pepper Ice Cream") over a sonic bricolage that jams together some of the most strikingly original sounds that have ever found their way onto a record. The group's stunning (if occasionally grating) début, "Viva! La Women" is one of last year's must-have albums. (Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. 921-1940. Aug. 27 at 8.)

K. D. Lang—In eschewing the country flavor on last year's "All You Can Eat," Lang traded in her long-standing Patsy Cline fetish for a sort of onanistic Bryan Ferry languor and found herself with her first certified flop. But no one should attribute this failure to the wrath of alienated fans or to the flaws of "All You Can Eat"—which, despite the ennui that hobbles the record, her prodigious voice still lifts far above anything else in the cutout bins. Instead, she has fallen victim to the sort of career-crippling backlash that has afflicted everyone from Pamela Anderson Lee to Tiny Tim. Over the past few years, Lang has allowed herself to be reduced to a vegetarian-lesbian-Canadian something-or-other, and thus let her formidable talent be overshadowed by shtick. Still, anyone who has the pleasure of hearing her voice at the beach won't have too many worries about her. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 29 at 8.)

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DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

Jethro Tull / Emerson, Lake & Palmer—An art-rock master class. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 30 at 8.)

Joe Cocker / Fabulous Thunderbirds / Buddy Guy—Rhythm and blues, blues rock, and simply the blues. More than just a walking John Belushi impersonation, Cocker still has a mighty rasp and spastic grace. Blasting away since the late seventies, the T-Birds have been among the most consistent purveyors of twangy Texas guitar rock. Buddy Guy is the real deal: a Chicago guitar shaman. His best album (and autobiography) is called "Damn Right, I've Got the Blues." After one note, you will, too. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 31 at 8.)

ONLY CONNECT

Web Sightings

Letter to Laredo (http://www.ely.com)—Though "country-and-Western cyberspace" is a term that hasn't yet made it into the lexicon, the Lubbock legend Joe Ely has a Web page that serves as his spiritual home. And it's a good thing, too, since Ely is a non-stop touring machine (his Stage Stops page lists his ever-expanding itinerary). You won't often find him in Lubbock (which also gave us Buddy Holly, Waylon Jennings, Roy Orbison, and Ely's sometime collaborator, Jimmie Dale Gilmore—is it the water?), but you might find him playing at your local roadhouse.

Ely's home page is as simple as an antique "wanted" poster, and the other pages follow suit, their design evoking a mythical one-horse town. "Letter to Laredo" is also the title of Ely's brilliant 1995 release, but the site isn't limited to the latest. The Library includes a discography ("Laredo" was the troubadour's thirteenth album), song lyrics, photographs, and a biography (which omits the facts that in previous incarnations Ely worked as a fruit picker and a circus hand). The Newspaper is rife with recent trivia (Ely's song "Character Flaw" graces the new Ron Shelton picture, "Tin Cup"; Springsteen pops up in a new Ely video; etc.). The Cantina offers CDs and cassettes for sale by mail. But it's the Jail that really sets this site apart: three gallery pages—titled Jail, Chippy, and Fences—which feature Ely's slightly Daliesque prints (e.g., of a diary flying through a halo of flames into a purgatory of neon bar signs). The works on the Jail page are true to its theme ("How to Roll Jail Cigarettes," "How to Make Jail Tattoos"). Calling on Chippy brings up a plastic-faced, pointy-breasted mannequin, more frightening in each frame. The art on the Fences page is set off by a recent Ely lyric ("I could feel her breath against the back of my neck, hotter than Houston . . ."); shadows of drum kits and motorcycles fall across iron and stone fences and what looks like kudzu. Such is the legacy of the travelling musician.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **Diana Krall** shines in the Oak Room through Aug. 24. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Guitarist **Larry Carlton** plays through Aug. 25. Aug. 27-Sept. 1: The **Caribbean Jazz Project**. The **Pharoah Sanders** group and the **Jacky Terrasson** trio get the call starting Sept. 3. Dining.

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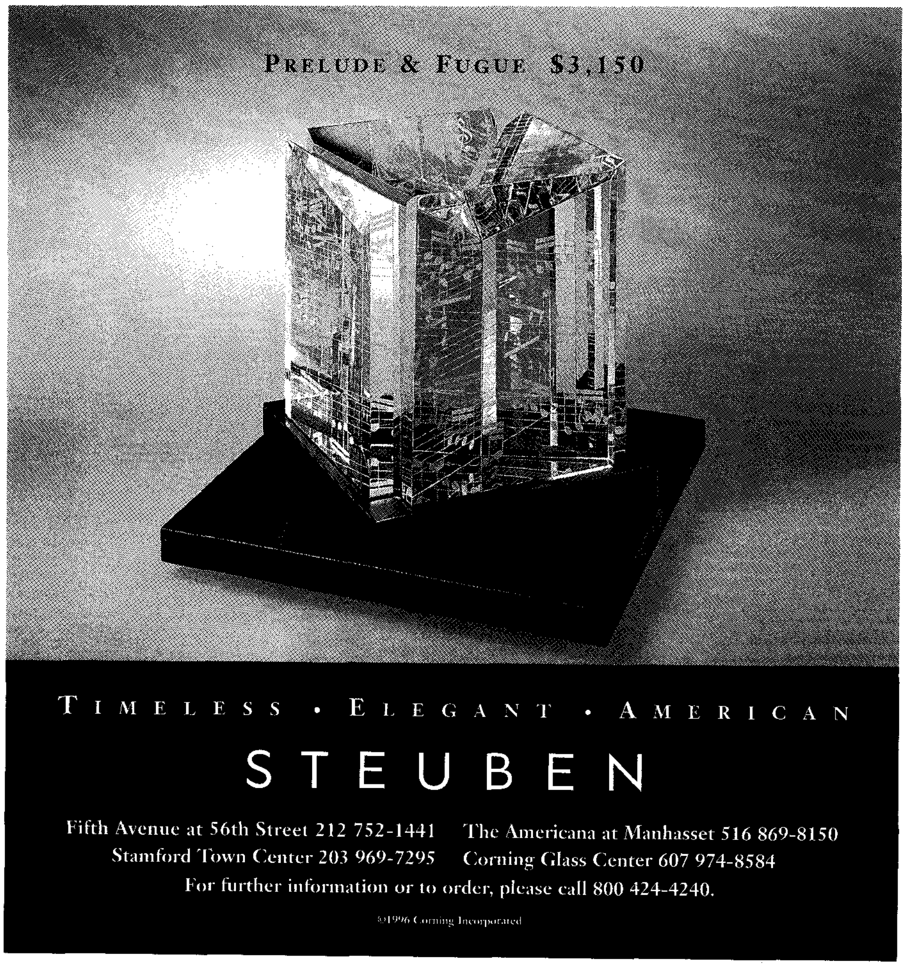
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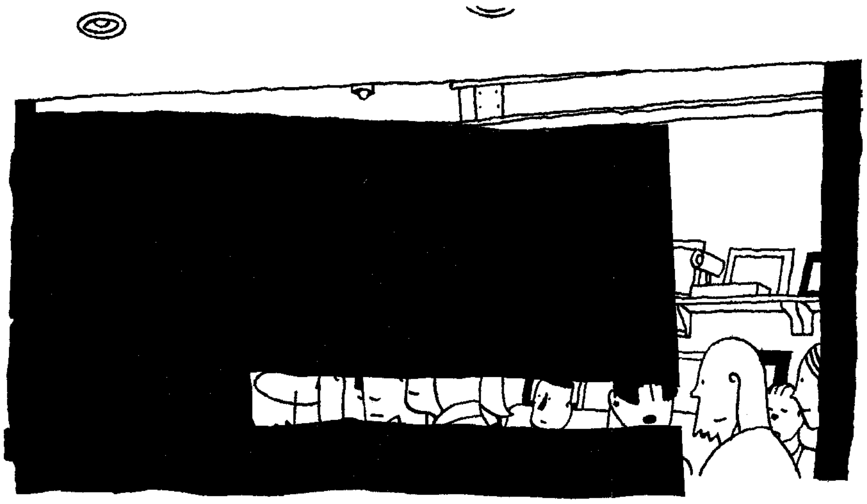
BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Through Aug. 24: our preëminent trombonist, **STEVE TURRE,** is joined by the fine young pianist **STEPHEN SCOTT** and the always responsive bassist **BUSTER WILLIAMS.** Aug. 26-31: **RUSSELL MALONE** has roots that reach a little deeper than most up-and-coming guitarists': he's got an easy way with Swing Era rhythms and improvisatory ploys that give his playing a propulsive edge.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Jamming late into the night at Smalls, the aptly named jazz club.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—The **TOOTS THIELEMANS** quartet takes over starting Sept. 2. The world's foremost jazz-harmonica player, Thielemans is one of the most lyrically astute musicians around. His ballads are heartbreaking, and his bop forays regularly astonish. Dining.

SMALLS, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—Jazz seven nights a week. Aug. 23-24: The Dan Falk quartet.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Aug. 25: the **KENNY GARRETT** quartet. Aug. 27-Sept. 1: The **ANDREW HILL** quartet. Though Hill's music is still dark, elusive, unsettling, and utterly beautiful, his artistic peak came in the sixties, the only decade that could really tolerate such an oblique harmonic stance, jerky mid-tempo melodies, and dirgelike ballads (his trademark). But it isn't free jazz and it isn't hard bop—it's a private music that never really fit in any time. Whatever it is, you can now find it gloriously chronicled on "The Complete Andrew Hill Blue Note Sessions," on Mosaic Records. If the pianist and composer has mellowed over the years, there's still enough of the iconoclast in him to remind you of the good (and weird) old days. The now-you-see-him-now-you-don't Hill has played the outsider for so long that exposure to the spotlight may have dizzying effects. Pianist **MULGREW MILLER** grabs a handful of keys on Sept. 3. Dining.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—**DOROTHY DONEGAN** offers a romping piano seminar in the Chestnut Room through Aug. 25. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Aug. 25: the **TERENCE BLANCHARD** quintet. As Spike Lee's Bernard Herrmann, Blanchard has turned in some vibrant and atmospheric scores, but his capabilities as a soloist aren't in danger of being overlooked—he's the best of the neo-Marsalis trumpeters, a thrilling virtuoso with a romantic streak. Aug. 27-Sept. 1: The **WYCLIFFE GORDON** and **RONALD WESTRAY** quintet. Trombones reign in Gordon and Westray's group, as do Southern sweetness, modern harmonies, and modal grooves. Starting Sept. 3: The **CLARK TERRY** quintet. Terry is a motormouth: splaying torrents on his trumpet or flugelhorn or just letting loose a wash of gibberish, he's ready to tell the world everything he's learned in a lifetime. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ROCK, ETC.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Aug. 23-24: **OTIS RUSH.** Some bluesmen are nothing more than hollow collections of pat phrases and rictal poses, but Rush is the real thing: his sandpaper voice and the groaning simplicity of his guitar transcend all manner of pain and suffering. An essential experience.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Aug. 28: The **WILD COLONIALS** are the salonistes of the L.A. music scene. Dr. John, Cyndi Lauper, and Rickie Lee Jones are among the guests on the band's new album, "This Can't Be Life," which is driven by Angela McCluskey's heartfelt honey-and-hot-sauce vocals. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Aug. 24: **G. LOVE AND SPECIAL SAUCE,** a dynamite trio from Philadelphia, play amazingly loose and swinging rap songs—funky odes to John Lee Hooker, hoops, beer, and other low-down pleasures. Vocalist G. Love has molded a distinctive combination of chicken-shack hip-hop grooves and bluesy guitar riffs in a rap market crowded with busy, overproduced gangsta records. Aug. 27: Rock legend **TODD RUNDGREN.** Aug. 31: **TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS.** If Bob Marley and the Wailers were the heart of reggae, then Frederick (Toots) Hibbert and his Maytals are surely its soul: it was the group's 1968 hit, "Do the Reggay," that gave ska, dub, rock steady, and every other substratum of Jamaican music one all-encompassing name. Hibbert's passionate, preaching style fused Kingston with Memphis, a feat that was made multiculturally clear on "Toots in Memphis," his 1988 album of Stax/Volt covers.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Aug. 29: Instrumental rock with **LARS VEGAS.** Aug. 31: Former Cars front man **RIC OCASEK** meets former Suicide front man **ALAN VEGA.**

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Aug. 23-24: **IKE TURNER AND THE IKETTES.** He may be better known now as pop music's most notorious spouse abuser, but history will remember him as a rock-and-roll pioneer. It was in Memphis, back in 1951, that Turner and his Kings of Rhythm recorded the rollicking "Rocket 88," which many experts regard as the first real rock-and-roll record. As an independent producer, Turner spent much of the fifties presiding over groundbreaking sessions by the likes of B. B. King, Howlin' Wolf, and Bobby Bland. He later moved to St. Louis and met Annie Mae Bullock, whom he married and rechristened Tina—the rest is her story. But if you go looking for more than melodrama, you may actually learn a thing or two from this troubled but talented man. Aug. 31: African pop star **KING SUNNY ADE.**

VON, 3 Bleecker St. (473-3039)—This narrow, comfortable, dimly lit Lower East Side hangout, with its tattered sofa and glass-doored, knickknack-stuffed cabinets, looks a little like an antique parlor. If it's not too busy, the bartender will fix you something simple to eat, like a hard-boiled egg; sometimes the owner's pit bull accepts caresses. There's coffee, Belgian beer, port, but no hard stuff—it's all very congenial. Tuesday night is Abstrakt, a relaxed, d.j.-driven evening of musical exotica—but talented d.j.s appear on other nights, too.

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"McInerney at his best …Both tragic & comic & with a superb eye for detail." –RUTH COUGHLIN, Cleveland Plain Dealer

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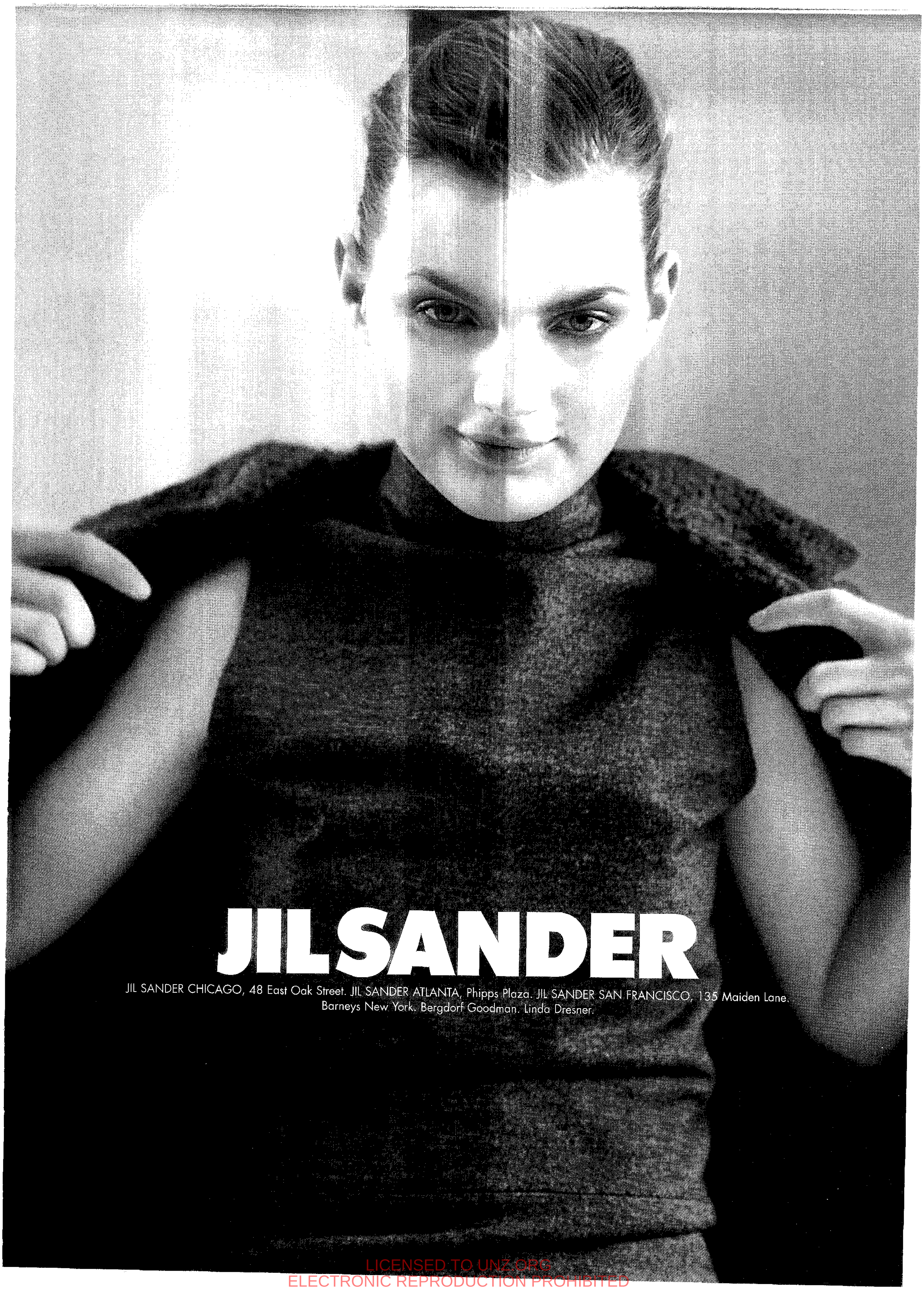
THE LAST OF THE SAVAGES



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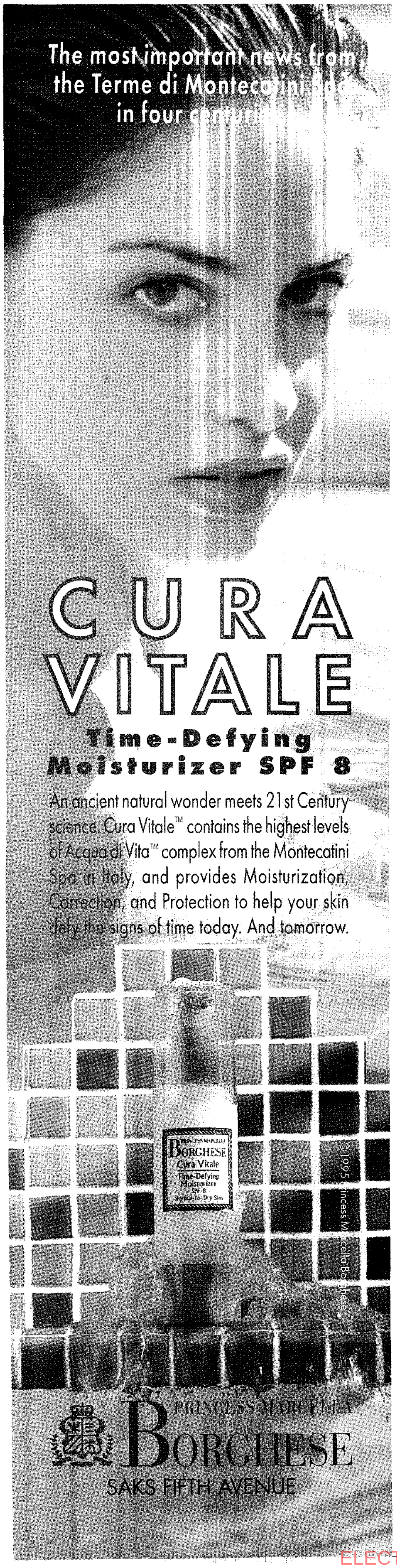
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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Winslow Homer," a comprehensive survey of the painter's career, comprising nearly two hundred paintings, watercolors, and drawings. The exhibition is sumptuous, deeply satisfying, and well balanced, and it reveals unsuspected depths in Homer's art. Yet the images that will stay with you are the stout-hearted mountain guides, the bashful adolescent lovers, the daydreaming schoolteacher oblivious of her pupils' innocent games under cloudless skies. Was America ever really such an idyllic place? The dark edges are there (some of the seascapes are truly terrifying), but the overwhelming impression is of a defiantly hopeful spirit; even the early, reportorial Civil War paintings emphasize the camaraderie and bravery of the soldiers rather than their suffering. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Ancient Art from the Shumei Family Collection." A grab bag of antiquities with no theme beyond excellence—and that's good enough. The Shumei Family is a spiritual organization with a strong aesthetic emphasis which is building a mountaintop museum in Japan designed by I. M. Pei. The objects on loan range from exquisitely wrought gold vessels from third-millennium-B.C. Persia to remarkably fresh Roman garden frescoes to exuberantly painted Islamic ceramics. According to the founder of the Shumei, "Unless you make others happy, you can never be happy yourself"; this exhibition should bring felicity to everyone connected with it. Through Sept. 1. . . . ¶ "Toulouse-Lautrec." Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ More than eight hundred musical instruments from the museum's vast collection remain on permanent view in the André Mertens Galleries, on the second floor. Among the highlights are the oldest extant piano (1720, Bartolomeo Cristofori), violins by luthiers Stradivari and Amati, and a Ming dynasty pi-pa (or lute), with a hundred and ten carved-ivory plaques on its back. Also on display (in the American Wing, through Sept. 1) is "Making Music: Two Centuries of Musical Instrument Making in New York," which includes everything from recorders to steel drums to a theremin. . . . ¶ "Art of the Deccani Sultans." Through Aug. 25. . . . NOTE: The museum's roof garden is open (weather permitting), with sculptures by Rodin, Lachaise, Lipchitz, Caro, Smith (David), and Smith (Tony). (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"From Bauhaus to Pop." No one besides Alfred Barr has done more to make MOMA the world's premier modern-art collection than Philip Johnson: a member of its first advisory committee (starting in 1930), the first director of its Department of Architecture and Design, and the designer of the Sculpture Garden (1953) and the East Wing (1964), he has also given the collection some of its most important holdings, especially in Abstract Expressionism, Pop, and minimalism. In honor of his ninetieth birthday, the museum has put together a selection of his gifts. Many are familiar and all are topnotch, but there is a feeling of one-eachness about the exhibit: the single Abstract Expressionist gallery, for example, squeezes in Newman, Rothko, Gottlieb, Stout, Tomlin, a ravishing Guston, a wee Kline, and a Chamberlain. Through Sept. 3. . . . ¶ "Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation" includes a hundred and thirty paintings, and nearly as many works on paper, depicting lovers, wives, poets, art dealers, and children. Through Sept. 17. . . . ¶ "Pictures of the Times: A Century of Prints from the New York *Times*." Through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ "Thinking Print: Books to Billboards, 1980-95," an ambitious and engaging show that covers a lot of ground in a thematically unified manner—linking the advent of new printmakers (e.g., Barbara Kruger, Félix González-Torres, Kiki Smith) with such recent trends as the resurgence of politically engaged art and of metaphors of the body. Through Sept. 10. (For the run of the Picasso show, the museum's hours are Saturdays through Mondays, 9:30 to 6; Tuesdays, 11 to 6; and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30. Timed-entry tickets to Picasso are available in the lobby and through Ticketmaster, at 307-4545.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Africa: The Art of a Continent." This exhibition is bound to infuriate both scholars and ideologues with the manner in which it collapses historical, ethnographic, and aesthetic distinctions between diverse cultures (imagine an exhibition titled "Europe: The Art of a Continent"). In presenting the predominantly Islamic arts of Northern Africa, the antiquities of Egypt, and the many different cultures of sub-Saharan Africa all at once, the curators seem to propound two overlapping but not particularly cogent ideological agendas: a celebratory Pan-Africanism on the one hand and a "Family of Man" group hug on the other. That said, the show is still a must-see for its rich selection of resplendent objects. And the catalogue is filled with excellent essays by renowned scholars of the new black studies. Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ "In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present." The first exhibition of this scope on this topic in New York includes work by twenty-eight artists, from forties studio portraits by Salla Casset and Seydou Keita to more personal and experimental photographs from the eighties and nineties by Santu Mofokeng, Gordon Bleach, Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé, and Mody Sory Diallo. One section of the show features pictures published in *Drum*, the influential magazine founded in South Africa in 1951 and subsequently published in Nigeria, Ghana, and East and Central Africa as well. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Meret Oppenheim: Beyond the Teacup." Through Oct. 9. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"NYNY: City of Ambition." The perfect summer show, an anthology of twentieth-century images of New York drawn mostly from the permanent collection, presented in an installation as bold, entertaining, and aggressive as the city itself. The emphasis is on photography, from the lavender majesty of Steichen's nocturnes to the gritty realism of Weegee, but some favorite paintings are dusted off as well: Georgia O'Keeffe, Edward Hopper, Charles Sheeler, and Joseph Stella are among those well represented. The architectural models of the Empire State Building (in carved plaster) and Rockefeller Center (in finely detailed wood) are fascinating—but why is a cocktail dress draped over Mies van der Rohe's model of the Seagram Building? Through Oct. 27. . . . ¶ "Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West," a subdued, library-style exhibit of books and prints from 1848 to the present, which makes up in substance for what it lacks in fire. Most of the landmark photographic books on the subject are here—competing railroad reports illustrated by Alexander Gardner and A. J. Russell; mammoth survey albums that include works by Timothy O'Sullivan, Carleton Watkins, and William Henry Jackson; "An American Exodus," the searing Dust Bowl record by Dorothea Lange and Paul S. Taylor; "From the Missouri West," Robert Adams's complex revisioning of the land. And the prints are delightful. One O'Sullivan photograph details velvety black outcroppings of columnar basalt lining a volcanic ridge; in an exquisitely toned picture by Laura Gilpin, a powerful storm sweeps over the floodplain of the Rio Grande. Other well-chosen works come from Frederick Sommer, Edward Weston, Eliot Porter, Ansel Adams, Lewis Baltz, Mark Klett, Richard Misrach, and Lee Friedlander. Through Sept. 22. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Okavango: Africa's Last Eden," thirty large color photographs by Frans Lanting, of the wildlife of the Okavango Delta, in Botswana. . . . ¶ An exhibition that explores the relationship between scientific research and its

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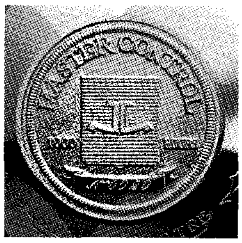

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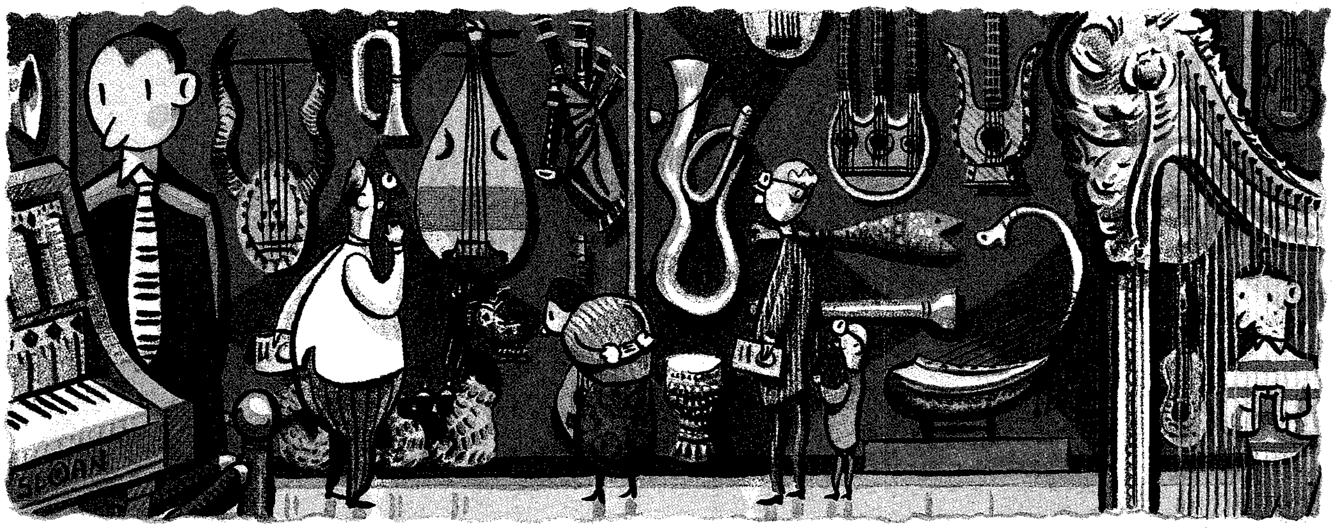
presentation in the media, specifically, the New York *Times*. Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ The Hall of Vertebrate Origins has reopened, its dropped ceiling removed to reveal Calvert Vaux's skylit design. All the better to see the dunkleosteus, a sixteen-foot-long hanging model of an armored fish, based on the four-foot-long fossil of its head, with self-sharpening jawbones. . . . ¶ "Amber: Window to the Past." Through Sept. 2. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Breaking Barriers: Recent American Craft," a wide range of works by such artists as Jean Williams Cacicedo (large felt coats), Viola Frey (painted ceramic figures), Albert Paley (bent-steel furniture), and Jane Sauer (fibre sculptures). Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ Patrick Dougherty's "Crossing Over," a large, vortexlike sculpture made from intertwined saplings and branches. Through Oct. 13. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Anyone curious about the current state of figurative painting will find signs of life at this year's edition of a juried exhibition that has been held annually since 1826. Loring Coleman's watercolor "Frozen Quiet" effectively uses the white ground to create a peaceful, snowy landscape. David Ruiz's "Self Portrait with Skeleton" is arrestingly conceived and flawlessly executed. Another self-portrait, by Richard Maury, is fearless and truthful, right down to the endearing detail of the title on an art-book jacket rendered just as it appeared in the artist's mirror: niɘtƨnɘtdɔi⅃. Some big names participate (Philip Pearlstein contributed a prize-winning nude), but most of the show is devoted to talented semiprofessionals, several of whose paintings are as sophisticated as anything in SoHo. Through Sept. 1. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission after 5.)

Henry Selick and Tim Burton, Lee Breuer, Julie Taymor, and Robert Wilson. Through Sept. 28. (Open daily, except Sundays, noon to 6, and Monday and Thursday evenings until 8.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. While it's all of interest—early gold-plated brass works, cast-bronze models for unrealized playgrounds, Japanese paper lanterns adapted for electricity—stone is the core medium. Its names alone (jasper, serpentine, Languedoc marble, red Persian travertine) are sensuous, and the stone sculptures rise among the birches, ivy, brick, and steel of Queens like indigenous art—relics of a civilization. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6. Through Oct. 31.)



Sounds to behold: the Metropolitan Museum's musical-instrument collection, in the André Mertens Galleries.

MICHAEL SLOAN

Dahesh Museum, Fifth Ave. at 49th St.—An institution devoted to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century academic art from the collection of the Lebanese writer Salim Moussa Achi (1909-84), who at the age of twenty adopted the name Dr. Dahesh ("inspiring wonder"). "On the Prowl: Hunters and the Hunted" offers paintings, watercolors, and sculptures by a host of animaliers. Through Oct. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"The Illegal Camera: Photography in the Netherlands During the German Occupation, 1940-1945." Sixty works by professional and amateur Dutch photographers who documented the arrests of Jews, forced labor, looting, and starvation. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Documenting the Times: Adolph S. Ochs and the Early Years of the New York *Times*." Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ "Being William Morris: A Centenary Exhibition." Through Sept. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Drawing the Future: Design Drawings for the 1939 New York World's Fair." The visions of two dozen architects, artists, and designers, including studies for the Trylon and the Persiphere and a fabulous unrealized fantasy by Frank Paul: a giant Roman centurion by the name of Micromegas sitting on a domed building and contemplating a globe resting on his knee. Starts Aug. 21. . . . ¶ "Gaelic Gotham: A History of the Irish in New York" features more than four hundred paintings, prints, photographs, costumes, and other objects, from the museum's collection and on loan from many other institutions. Through Oct. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—An exhibition titled "Privy to History" features artifacts, photographs, and documents relating to an excavated eighteen-seventies outhouse that belonged to an Irish family on Broome Street. Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ Photographs, prints, furniture, books, and other objects are on view in "Becoming Eleanor Roosevelt: The New York Years, 1884-1933." . . . ¶ Seven Louis Comfort Tiffany lamps are on display, along with a few other Tiffany objects, a Tiffany oil painting of the Palisades, and photographs of interiors he designed and of his workshops. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ "July 9, 1776: New York's Independence Day." A show of documents, paintings, guns, and other memorabilia chronicling the day on which New York, the only colony to have abstained from ratifying the Declaration of Independence five days earlier, finally committed itself to open rebellion. (Its fears were well founded: Washington lost New York in September, and the city was occupied by the British for the duration of the war.) Through Sept. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Part II of "The Hand of the Poet" presents original manuscripts by the likes of Cummings, Moore, Merrill, Auden, Bishop, Lowell, Moss, Nabokov, and Sexton. . . . ¶ "Headlines, Deadlines, Bylines: The New York *Times* Morgue, 1896-1996." Through Oct. 18. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center—"Puppets and Performing Objects in the 20th Century," a gathering of puppets, marionettes, and other constructions designed by a wide range of artists, including Alfred Jarry, Bil Baird, Jim Henson, Pat Oleszko,

Queens Museum at the Bulova Corporate Center, 75-20 Astoria Blvd., Jackson Heights—"Richard Rothman: Studies fom Nature." Selections from an ongoing series of photographs about the marginalization of nature, made during frequent swings through the outer boroughs and New Jersey. "Sound Wall, Queens" (1995) is one of several quick, sharp essays: a broken, denuded sycamore rises from the curb in front of a gridded cement sound wall, which protects a similarly rectilinear (and windowless) office building. Power lines float above the tree, completing the circuit of collusion against nature; a wavy line carved into the wall in an attempt to echo the natural world ends up mocking it. "Front Yard with Ailanthus, Brooklyn" shows a stubby, unbranched sapling (of the now disappearing species celebrated in "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn") and an old stump sharing a vest-pocket patch of dirt. Rothman's brand of black-and-white visual description isn't just straight documentary and it's not overly poetic: it's got a prosaic lilt, with alternating passages of bleak naturalism and wary optimism. More complex tableaux, like "Tall Tree and American Flags, Astoria," "Housing Projects with White Shutters," and "Graves, Queens," richly repay the extended reading required. Through Sept. 8. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 7 to 7; Saturdays, 11 to 4. For more information and for directions, call 1-718 899-0700.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"Ceremony and Spirit: Nature and Memory in Contemporary Latino Art," an exhibit of paintings and mixed-medium installations by sixteen artists, among them Josely Carvalho, George Crespo, Ester Hernandez, Frank Lopez-Motnyk, Pepón Osorio, and Regina Vater. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ This year's artists-in-residence show, titled ". . . To Carry Me Home," features a relief sculpture by Chakaia Booker,

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I have seen that tennis is a 100-mph chess match. I have seen that in tennis, Sunday is the day champions are born.
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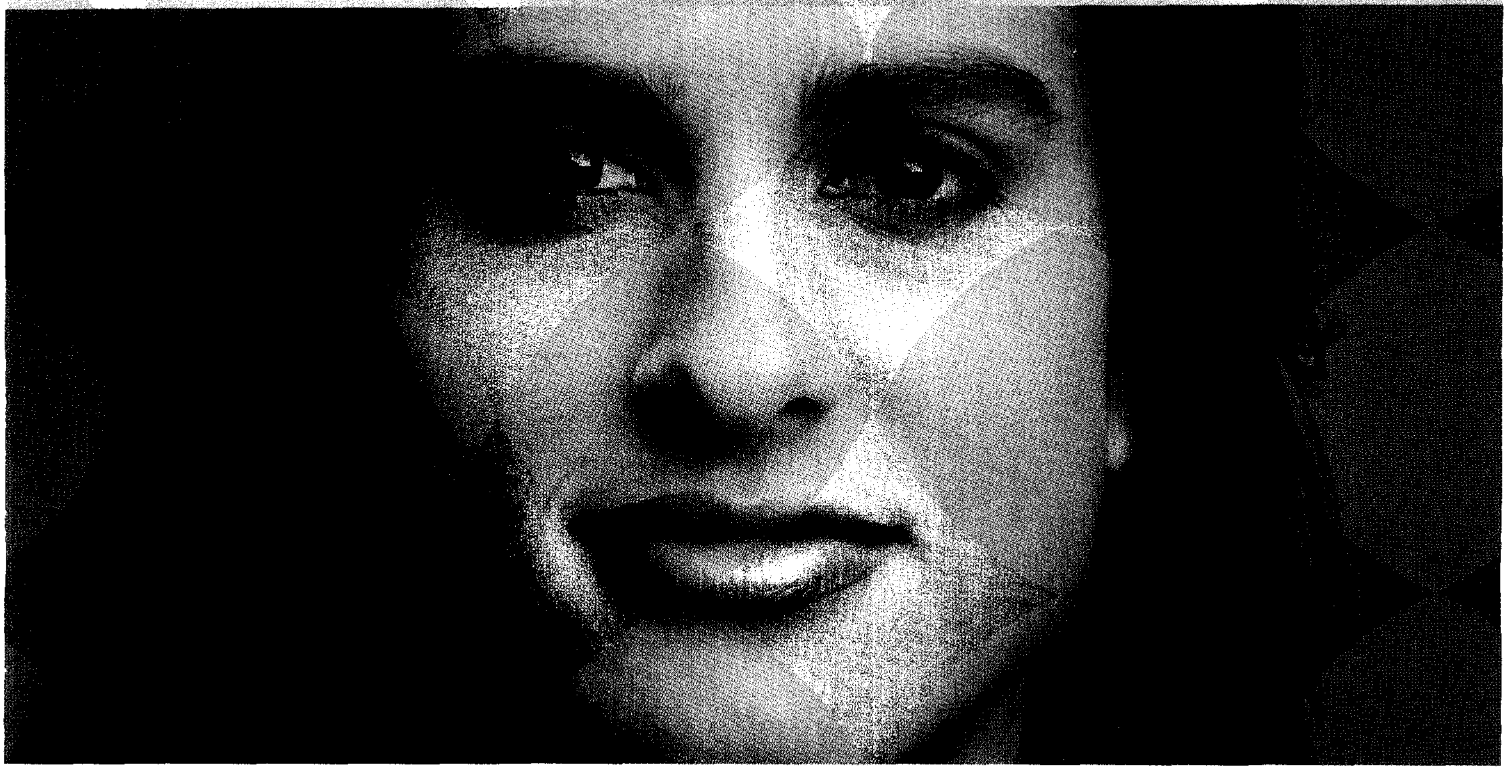
-Gabriela Sabatini, athlete.



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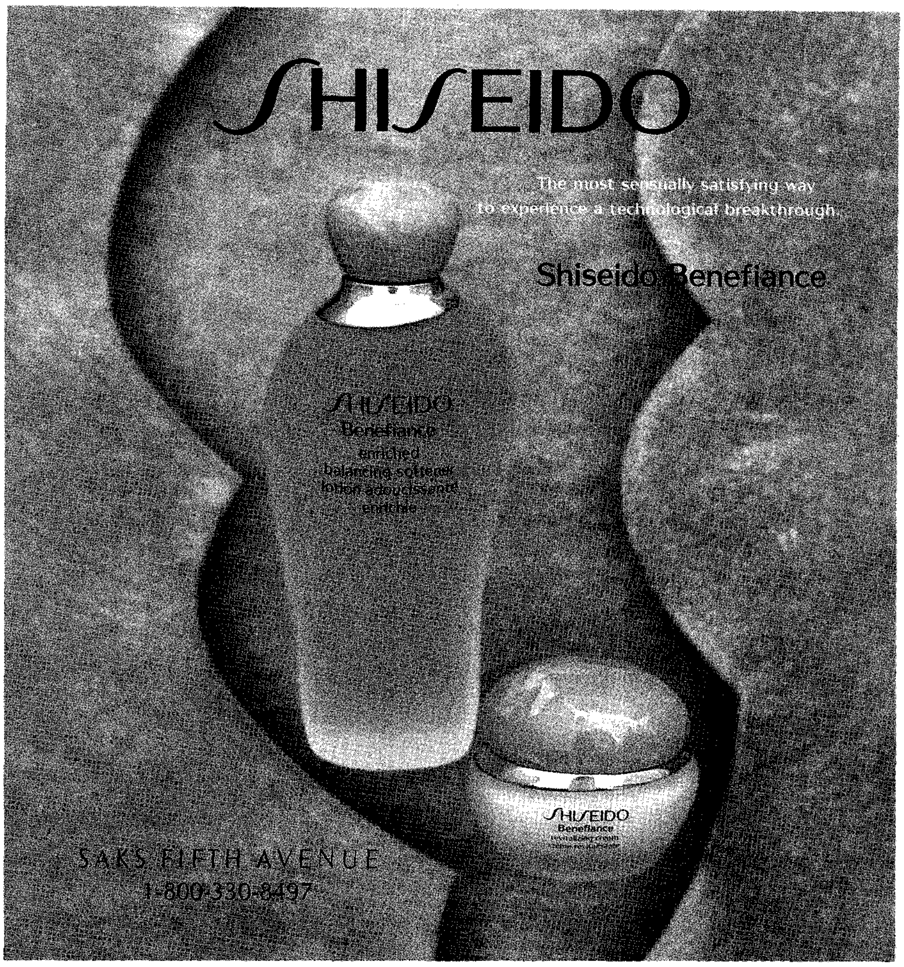

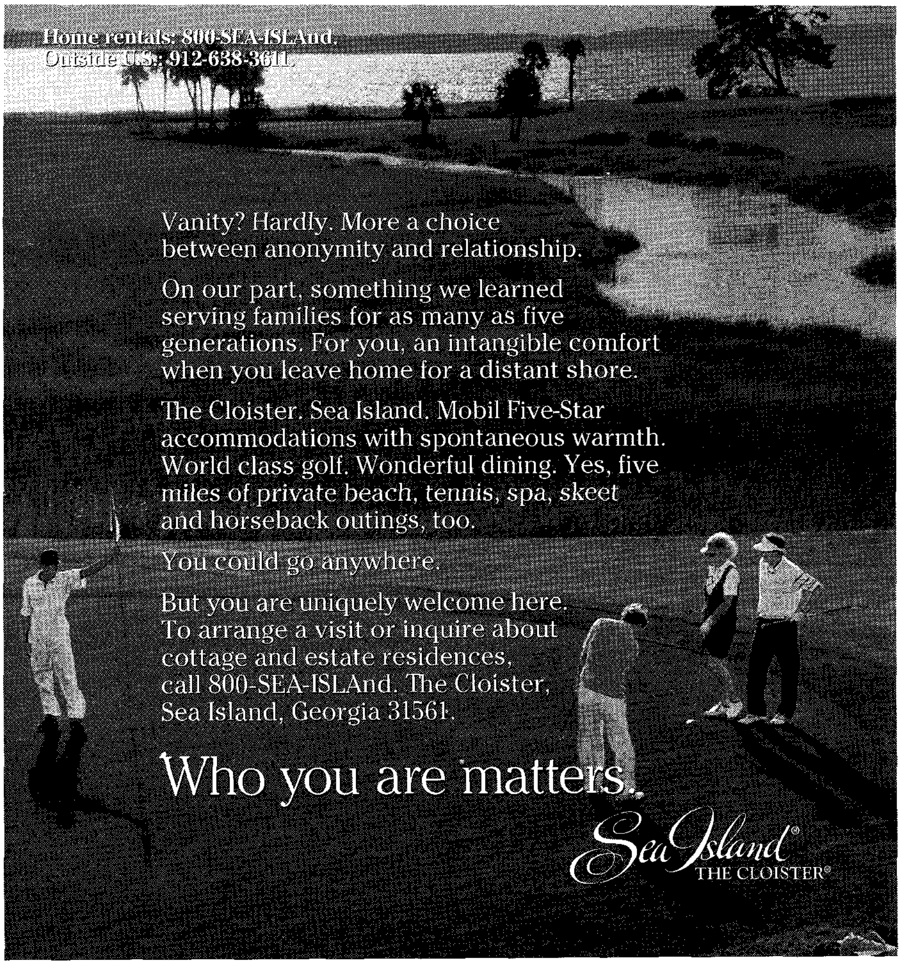
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a painting by Richard Lewis, and a sculptural installation by Michael Richards. Through Sept. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer hours: unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"Breaking All the Rules"—A recap of all the gallery's shows this season, with works by Beckmann, Coe, Corinth, Grosz, Klimt, Kokoschka, Litwak, Pippin, Schiele, and others. Through Sept. 6. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

"Different Sides"—Works in mediums uncharacteristic of the artists, including a film by Nancy Graves; photographs by David Smith, Richard Pousette-Dart, and Donald Sultan; and a sculpture and a painted postcard by Adolph Gottlieb. Through Aug. 30. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.)

"Exactitude"—Realist, figurative—whatever it is, there's a lot of detail. Among the artists whose works are on view are William Bailey, Kent Bellows, Philip Evergood, Raymond Han, Jane Lund, and Max Weber. Through Sept. 7. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"Fiber and Form: The Woman's Legacy"—Works by seven artists who have incorporated sewing and textiles into their art: Hannelore Baron, Lee Bontecou, Nancy Grossman, Eve Peri, Anne Ryan, Betye Saar, and Lenore Tawney. Through Sept. 3. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. Closed Mondays.)

"Recaptured Nature"—Paintings, sculptures, and photographs by gallery artists and guests, including Lothar Baumgarten, Dan Graham, Ellsworth Kelly, Anselm Kiefer, Richard Long, Gerhard Richter, and Jeff Wall. Through Aug. 30. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St.)

"Water"—*Acqua, agua, eau,* H_2O: ocean waves by Vija Celmins, abstract swimmers by Judith Cotton, a sweeping vista of an African lake by April Gornik, and a sublime night seascape by Hiroshi Sugimoto. Through Aug. 29. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

Group Shows—At **marisa del re,** 41 E. 57th St.: A sampling of twentieth-century movements, represented by, among others, Karel Appel, Arman, Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Pousette-Dart, and James Rosenquist. Through Aug 30. . . . **pace wildenstein,** 32 E. 57th St.: Sculptures and paintings by Donald Judd, Joel Shapiro, Barbara Hepworth, Elizabeth Murray, and Robert Mangold. Through Sept. 7. (Closes Fridays at 4.)

Short List—**elizabeth olds,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. Through Aug. 23. . . . **larry poons,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Through Aug. 30.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

AC2K—"SoHo So Long," a smart and funny mixed-medium installation by "the Artist Formerly Known as Art Club 2000" (the reduction of the name seems to have been inspired by Calvin Klein's CK1). This collective of twentysomething artists is perhaps best known for its satirical Gap ads and shop installation (a project that received attention from both the critics and the Gap's attorneys). Now the group has turned its attention to the shifting fortunes of SoHo as retail takes over and galleries flock to Chelsea. The centerpiece of the exhibition is a series of photographs of dealers, critics, and collectors—no artists—posing in various *echt*-SoHo locations; the accompanying catalogue includes transcripts of interviews with the subjects, who answer such questions as "Is SoHo over?" and "Will Chelsea reign?" Through Aug. 31. (American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. Opens at noon. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

Edward Ruscha—A retrospective of the California Pop Conceptualist's artist books of the sixties. Their procedures (serialism, enumeration, etc.) notwithstanding, they avoided the often prim or sour seriousness of other Conceptual art. (The most dramatic of the books, "Royal Road Test," documents Ruscha and a friend's defenestration of a Royal typewriter onto a California freeway.) "Every Building on the Sunset Strip," "Twentysix Gasoline Stations," "Various Small Fires and Milk," "Some Los Angeles Apartments"—these serenely deadpan titles belie a body of work that, despite its unassuming manner and humble materials, represents one of the lasting achievements of sixties art. Through Aug. 31. (Printed Matter, 77 Wooster St. Open Saturdays until 7.)

"Boliw: Shrine Figures of the Bamana, Mali"—A group of twelve sacred sculptures, made from such materials as wood, earth, clay, bones, blood, urine, beer, and bark. Through Oct. 5. (Blum, 99 Wooster St.)

Group Shows—At **Morris Healy,** 530 W. 22nd St.: Drawings and other works by gallery artists which are either made directly on a wall, set into a wall, or, in the case of Tom Sachs's piece, shot through a wall with a gun. Through Aug. 23. . . . **Nosei,** 530 W. 22nd St.: Paintings and a photograph by gallery artists, including Fernando Canovas, Arturo Elizondo, Julio Galán, Shirin Neshat, and Manuel Ocampo. Through Aug. 30.

OTHER VENUES

"Art in the Anchorage"—Creative Time's thirteenth annual exhibition, held in the vaults of the Brooklyn Bridge, consists of digital and other media installations by such artists as Doug Aitken (collaborating with composer U-ziq), Rebeca Bollinger, Jim Campbell, Shirin Neshat, and Penelope Umbrico. Through Aug. 25. (Cadman Plaza West at Front St., Brooklyn. Thursdays through Sundays, 1 to 6. For more information, and for directions, call 206-6674, ext. 251.)

"Bicycles: History, Beauty, Fantasy"—An appreciation of the bike's evolution from 1817 to 1920, including examples of the Phantom velocipede (the first bicycle with a rubber tire), the Ariel (the first manufactured high-wheeler), and the Old Hickory Ladies' Model (made from sixteen plies of laminated second-growth hickory). Through Oct. 4. (PaineWebber Building, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St. Open Mondays through Fridays, 8 to 6.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Bing Wright / Jenny Saville and Glen Luchford—"Wet Glass," a series of bluish-gray monochromatic pictures of water drips and patterns on glass. / For a pair of eight-by-six-foot prints, painter Saville directed fashion photographer Luchford as he snapped pictures of her nude body pressed against a sheet of glass. Through Aug. 30. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Closes Fridays at 4.)

"The Cool & the Crazy"—Images of punk through the years, from a naked Iggy Pop to Television at CBGB to Lydia Lunch to Richard Hell. The photographers include Jimmy de Sana, Gerard Malanga, Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, Allen Ginsberg, Annie Leibovitz, Stephen Shore, and Pennie Smith. Through Sept. 7. (McGrath, 20 W. 57th St. Closed Mondays.)

WARD SCHUMAKER

"Games People Play"—A hundred years of images from the New York City Parks Department's photo archives: nineteenth-century croquet matches, latter-day hoops, a 1968 giant-Tinkertoy fest, fedoraed checkers players in 1934. Through Sept. 13. (Arsenal Gallery, Fifth Ave. at 64th St. Open weekdays 9 to 4:30.)

"Two" / Evelyn Hofer—A diverse selection of photographs that feature pairs of things—trees, feet, windows, watermelons, flowers, angels, firemen. The artists include Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Eugène Atget, André Kertész, Koichiro Kurita, August Sander, Jill Seymour, and Edward Weston. / Double portraits and interiors that inspired the concurrent group show. Both shows through Aug. 23. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Closed Mondays.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Landscapes of the Civil War." Selections from the five thousand recently discovered albumen prints in the collection of the Medford (Massachusetts) Historical Society. Through Nov. 10. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"In Times of War and Peace." This too large retrospective of photojournalism by the forty-year-old twins David and Peter Turnley covers and re-covers so much ground that you're beaten down and exhausted by the end—but it's worth it. The anguish of a Romanian factory worker or of a Zairean child is overwhelming; the reportage dealing with the end of South African apartheid and the carnage in Tiananmen Square is concise and riveting. Each photographer makes a fine portrait and renders an exquisite sense of place. Peter often shows a greater command of color and composition, while David, the more intuitive, has a flair for capturing the "decisive" moments. Through Sept. 8. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the Jewish Museum, and the Queens Museum at the Bulova Corporate Center.)

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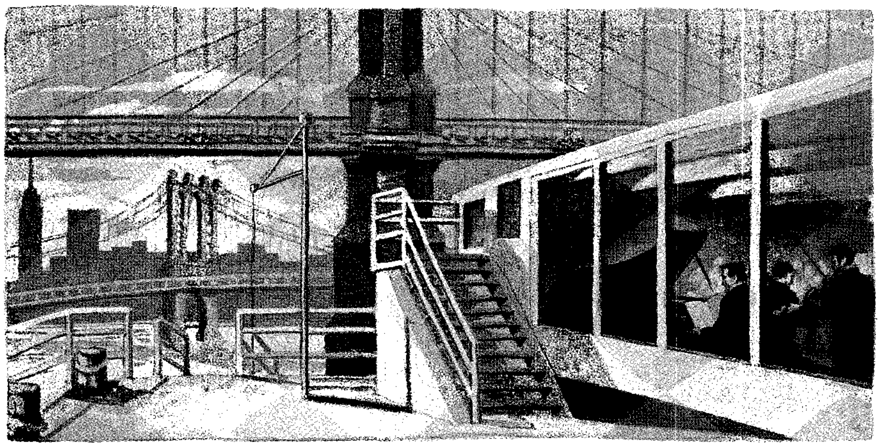
IN TOWN

Mostly Mozart—The final concerts of the season feature the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, conducted by Gerard Schwarz. Aug. 21: Though overshadowed by his older brother, Franz Joseph—both during his lifetime and after—Michael Haydn (1737-1806) was a composer of dependable skill, and sometimes of remarkable inspiration. He spent most of his career at the archiepiscopal court in Salzburg, where the Mozarts seem to have viewed him with genuine respect (though not without delight at his foibles). Schubert was unequivocal in his admiration; he visited Salzburg in 1825, seeking out Michael Haydn's memorial statue, and, in a detailed letter to his brother (in which, curiously, he never once mentions Mozart), he reported the sentiments he felt as he stood before it: "May your calm spirit be with me, good Haydn, and though I cannot be as calm and clear as you were, no one on Earth venerates you more sincerely than I do." This concert includes Michael Haydn's C-Major Symphony (traditionally numbered his Twenty-ninth), as well as two better-known Austrian masterpieces: Mozart's E-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (K. 271, featuring Stephen Hough) and Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with Joshua Bell). . . . ¶ Aug. 22: Franz Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 104 (the "London"), Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Hélène Grimaud), and two works by Mozart: the Violin Concerto No. 2 (with Gil Shaham) and the Symphony No. 39. . . . ¶ Aug. 23-24: In 1788, Mozart's friend and patron Baron van Swieten assumed the directorship of Vienna's Society of Associated Cavaliers, a group of musical antiquarians who produced concerts of ancient choral works. Anything older than a decade or two qualified as ancient, and the Cavaliers generally had the scores updated to accommodate current tastes. They commissioned Mozart to modernize several classics, including four major scores by Handel; his version of "Messiah," unveiled in March of 1789, remained the standard performing edition of Handel's oratorio until the middle of the twentieth century. This performance of the Handel-Mozart "Messiah" features the Pro Arte Chorale and soloists Patricia Schuman (soprano), Nancy Maultsby (mezzo-soprano), Vinson Cole (tenor), and Charles Austin (bass). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Evenings at 8, with a pre-concert lecture or recital each evening at 7.)



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Bargemusic—Where else can concertgoers board a moored vessel that rocks gently to the ebb and flow of the tide? Where else does the sun set over the Manhattan skyline as a backdrop to recitals? And where else do audiences spend their intermissions taking in the rays on the roof deck, viewing the Brooklyn Bridge from the newly renovated piers, or (in winter) gathering around an inviting fireplace? But as first-time visitors turn into regulars (and an impressive number do), they come to realize that the surroundings play a strictly supporting role to the music-making. The mainstream of chamber music rules the roost here, performed by a roster that includes eager up-and-comers as well as masters. Aug. 22 at 8:30 and Aug. 25 at 4: Violinist Mark Peskanov and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott perform Mozart's D-Major Violin Sonata (K. 306); cellist Ronald Thomas joins them for Mendelssohn's D-Minor Piano Trio. . . . **Note:** The Thursday performance is a candlelight benefit concert; it will be preceded by a dinner at 6:30. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 7:30: A song recital (an unusual offering for this venue), in which contralto Marion Dry, baritone Robert Honeysucker, and pianist Leslie Amper perform works by American composers. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 7:30 and Sept. 1 at 4: Violinist Lynn Chang and cellist Bion Tsang perform Alexander Tcherepnin's "Duo Fantasia"; Ms. Chang and pianist Randall Hodgkinson offer Brahms's A-Major Violin Sonata; and all join for Beethoven's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major (Op. 1, No. 1). . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 7:30: The Tempest Trio plays piano trios by Mozart (in B-Flat Major, K. 502), Shostakovich (in E Minor), and Brahms (in B Major). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061.)

Forum Music Group—This percussion ensemble from Taiwan offers a concert celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Chinese Information and Culture Center. (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. Aug. 23-24 at 7:30 and Aug. 25 at 2.)

Summergarden—Final concerts of this summer's series, which has spent nine weeks investigating music composed in Paris during the twentieth century (or the years just before it). Aug. 23-24: Flutist Ulla Suokko-Hixson performs Debussy's "Syrinx" and other unaccompanied works by André Jolivet, Kaija Saariaho, and Ahmed Essyad; pianist Stephen Gosling assists in Messiaen's "Le Merle Noir," Boulez's Sonatine, and Poulenc's Sonata. . . . ¶ Aug. 30-31: John Root offers piano works by Chausson ("Quelques Danses"), Debussy, Dukas, Messiaen, Tailleferre, Auric, and Stravinsky ("Three Movements from 'Petrushka' "). (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. Evenings at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

Sundays on the Island—Aug. 25 at noon: Flutist Patricia Monson is featured in music by three of Bach's sons: Carl Philipp Emanuel, Johann Christian, and Johann Christoph Friedrich. . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at noon: The Swiss violinist Indira Koch is the soloist in concertos by Mozart (his Second) and Manfredini (one movement of which consists of variations on "La Folia," the theme that proved irresistible to several generations of Baroque composers); with the City Island Baroque Ensemble. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478.)

Bronx Arts Ensemble—Harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper plays three sonatas by Scarlatti and leads works by Bach, Vivaldi (including arias sung by soprano Josephine Mongiardo), and

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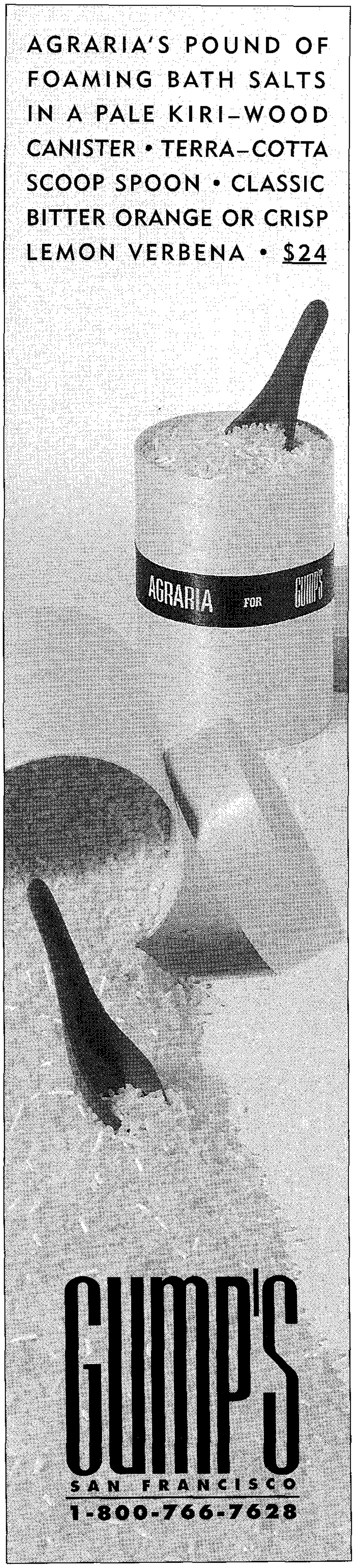
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Handel (an oboe concerto featuring Marsha Heller). (Aug. 25 at 2. Rockwood Drive Circle, Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx. In case of rain, the performance will be held at the Church of the Mediator, Kingsbridge Ave. at W. 231st St. No tickets necessary. . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 4. Keating Hall, Fordham University, Bronx Rose Hill Campus. No tickets necessary.)

Salon Soirées—Aug. 25: Pianist Rina Dokshitsky performs Chopin's Twenty-four Preludes (Op. 28) and short works by Brahms. . . . ¶ Sept. 1: A recital by pianist Yuri Kim. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Evenings at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

At the Mansfield—Free Monday-evening concerts in the music room of this midtown hotel. Aug. 26 at 8: Pianist Avner Arad offers Beethoven's E-Major Sonata (Op. 109) and several works by Chopin. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 8: Violinist Zoran Jacovcic and pianist Eleonor Bindman perform sonatas by Handel, Bach, and Beethoven (his First). (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

Glimmerglass Opera—Aug. 22 at 8 and Aug. 24 at 1:30: Mozart's "La Finta Giardiniera." . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 8 and Aug. 25 at 2: "La Calisto," composed in 1651 by Francesco Cavalli. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 8 and Aug. 26 at 2: "Don Pasquale." (Cooperstown, N.Y. 1-607 547-2255.)

Tanglewood—Final classical concerts of the season. Aug. 22 at 8:30: Tafelmusik, the Baroque orchestra from Toronto, offers Bach's "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 3, as well as instrumental works by Handel, Vivaldi, Charles Avison, Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, and Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber. Jeanne Lamon conducts. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 8:30: Robert Spano conducts the Boston Symphony in Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro" Overture, Barber's Violin Concerto (featuring Joshua Bell), André Previn's "Reflections," and Haydn's Symphony No. 82 (the "Bear"). . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 8:30: Robert Shaw conducts two monumental choral classics, Mozart's Requiem and Stravinsky's "Symphony of Psalms"; with soprano Christine Brewer, mezzo-soprano Marietta Simpson, tenor Karl Dent, bass Peter Rose, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and the Boston Symphony. . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 2:30: Bernard Haitink conducts Mozart's E-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (K. 271, featuring Emanuel Ax) and Ravel's complete score for "Daphnis et Chloé"; with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and the Boston Symphony. . . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 8:30: John Williams leads the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra in his own works. (Lenox, Mass. 1-413 637-5165.)

Music Mountain—Final concerts of the season. Aug. 24 at 8: John Solum is featured in period-instrument performances of works for flute and strings by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 3: The Cassatt String Quartet plays Mozart's String Quartet in D Major (K. 155), written in 1772, during the composer's third visit to Italy. Though he had already written several pieces for the combination of two violins, viola, and cello, this was the first work in which he began investigating the possibilities of intricate interaction among those instruments; one might even say that it is his first true string quartet. The rest of the program is given over to Beethoven: his Quartet in C Major (Op. 59, No. 3) and a group of songs (featuring tenor Robert White). . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 8: The Shanghai String Quartet plays quartets by Haydn (in G Major, Op. 77, No. 1) and Wolf (his "Italian Serenade"); cellist David Soyer completes the ensemble for Schubert's C-Major Quintet. . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 3: The Shanghai foursome offers Beethoven's F-Major String Quartet (Op. 18, No. 1), Frank Bridge's String Quartet No. 1, and (with Ruth Laredo) Shostakovich's Piano Quintet. (Falls Village, Conn. For information, call 1-860 824-7126.)

Maverick Concerts—Final concerts of the season. Aug. 25 at 3: Quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and Smetana played by the Tokyo String Quartet. . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 3: Violinist Charles Libove and pianist Nina Lugovoy play bonbons by Heifetz, Kreisler, Sarasate, and many others. (Woodstock, N.Y. 1-914 679-8217.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Horse Maneuvers—Another August, and the annual pilgrimage of horseplayers, society matrons, violinists, and Yaddo poets to Saratoga Springs is well under way. Early arrivals at the track can study the day's talent running workouts on the bedewed turf. Late brunchers may wish to park a lawn chair outside the grandstand and check one of the many TV monitors on which race results are flashed to every quadrant of the leafy old park. The champagne and strawberries will be abundant on Aug. 24, for the running of the $750,000 Travers Stakes, a late-season mile-and-a-quarter showdown favored by such big kahunas as Louis Quatorze, Skipaway, and Editors Note. If luck turns, there's always the Lincoln Baths (1-518 583-2880) at Saratoga Spa Park, where a soak in the fizzy waters has been known to cure the pari-mutuel blues. (For track information, call, 1-518 584-6200. Travers Day races begin at noon.)

The Service Nowadays—If you're looking to attend the tennis finals at the U.S. Open, on Sept. 8, now is the time to start those desperate calls to influential people. But if you just want to see some vicious hard-court behavior up close, consider the qualifying rounds, where sixty-four women and a hundred and twenty-eight men will compete over the course of four days for the tournament's remaining slots (sixteen for men, eight for women). While the play in the qualies is only fractionally less ballistic than in the Open proper, the tickets, which are free, are a lot easier to get your mitts on. (Flushing Meadows, Queens. The qualifying rounds run Aug. 21-24; the Open begins Aug. 26 and continues through Sept. 8. For more information, call 1-888 673-6849.)

Readings—Aug. 21 at 7: Novelists Ben Neihart ("Hey Joe"), Karla Kuban ("Marchland"), and Kim Benabib ("Obscene Bodies") read from their work. (KGB, 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 8: Poet Jill Bialosky ("The End of Desire") and novelist Robert Anasi ("The Cure for Love") read from their work. (alt.coffee, 139 Avenue A, at 9th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 6:30: Poets Jayne Cortez ("Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere") and Erica Hunt read from their work. (Union Square Park, Broadway at 16th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 7:30: Kathryn Harrison reads from her most recent novel, "Poison." (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Aug. 22 at 6:30: Eamonn Coghlan, who in 1983 ran the fastest indoor mile on record, talks strategy, psychology, and other ploys to help you get in at under four minutes. (Pier 60, Chelsea Piers Sports Complex. To register, call 423-2205.) . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at noon and 2: Medievalist Allison Merrill talks about St. Louis, one of the few kings to get a promotion. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2280. No charge beyond museum admission.) . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 1 and 3: Pilot Robert Cones demonstrates construction techniques for flightworthy paper airplanes. (Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave., at St. Marks Ave. No charge beyond museum admission. For more information, call 1-718 735-4402.)

Walks—Aug. 21 at 1: Infrastructure engineers for the M.T.A. keep the air circulating on their tour of the subway ventilation plant under the intersection of 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue. For more information, call 1-718 243-8601. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 1: Biologist Peter Warny introduces Brooklyn fish and amphibians to their human counterparts, as he seines the watercourse to Prospect Park Lake for a catch-and-release study. For more information, call the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, at 1-718 788-8500. . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 1: Seth Kamil of Big Onion Walking Tours retraces the first steps taken by Jewish, Italian, Irish, African, and Chinese immigrants and other settlers on the Lower East Side. For more information, call 439-1090.

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An enchanting romantic fable brought to the stage, Disney's **Beauty And The Beast** will delight children and adults alike, even if they already know the movie by heart. The story is a familiar one—a selfish prince, transformed into a monster as punishment for his vices, can only be changed back into a prince by love. The telling of this simple tale, though, is magical, and enlivening the vibrant production are several new songs that have been added to the film's Academy Award-winning score. Whimsical costumes and stunning special effects only serve to further the magic of **Beauty And The Beast** and enhance its ability to cast a spell on anyone who sees it. Once again, Disney has a hit on its hands. Only this time, it's on Broadway.

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Josh Baskin is just a normal twelve-year-old boy who, through a misconstrued wish, happens to be trapped in the body of a thirty-year-old man. If this sounds familiar, it's because **Big** is a Broadway remake of the 1988 hit movie starring Tom Hanks. Only, being on Broadway, **Big** the musical is, well, bigger than big. The cast is stellar, and the choreography has a flawless shine. And though the heart of this fable is seen through the eyes of childhood, **Big** strikes a chord with both adults and children alike. Big or small, everyone falls for **Big**.

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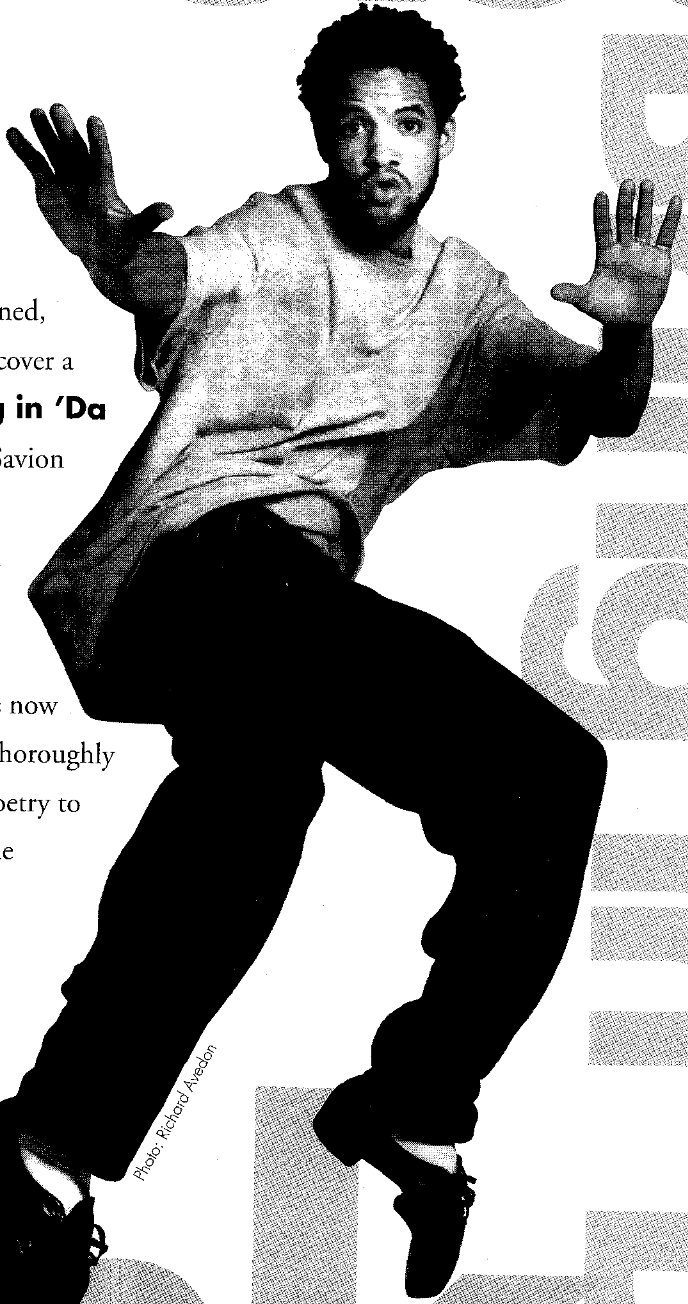

Photo: Richard Avedon

The black-American experience continues to be examined, defined, and redefined, but it would be difficult to discover a more novel exploration than the one offered by **Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk**. Young king of tap, Savion Glover, together with Tony Award-winning director George C. Wolfe, has devised an extraordinary musical journey through the history of black America. Glover, who first came to national prominence at the age of twelve, playing the title role in *The Tap Dance Kid*, has now become the youngest choreographer to win a Tony. A thoroughly modern musical, **Noise/Funk** layers tap with rap poetry to convey complicated emotion while telling a story. In the process, it energizes and reshapes musical theatre as we know it.

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cat's

From that moment of mystery when it first made history, no musical has enthralled more theatregoers than **Cats**. Based on a collection of poems by T.S. Elliot, with a score by Andrew Lloyd Webber, **Cats** is now in its fourteenth spectacular year on Broadway and will soon pass *A Chorus Line* as the longest-running show in Broadway history. From its eye-popping junkyard set to the mind-boggling choreography to its larger-than-life characters, **Cats** is a leaping, soaring tribute to the power of theatre—a fantastical world where anything is possible, and the 'memory' lives on forever. No wonder it is, now and forever, America's favorite family musical.

CATS

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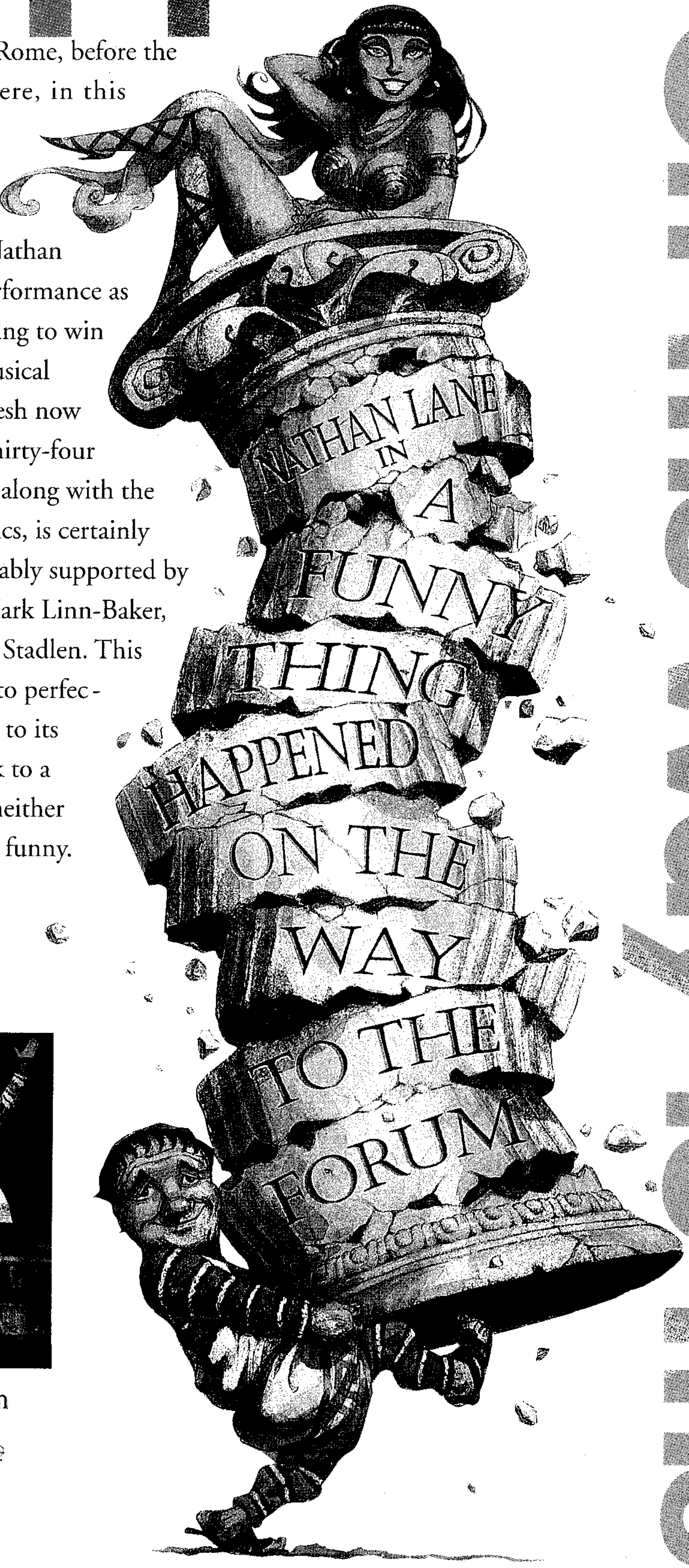
A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum

rney back to ancient Rome, before the ns were in ruins. Here, in this ghthearted place where the chariots are fast and the concubines faster, multiple award winner Nathan Lane gives a hilarious performance as Pseudolus, a slave scheming to win his freedom. A classic musical comedy, **Forum** is as fresh now as when it first opened thirty-four years ago. Though Lane, along with the Sondheim music and lyrics, is certainly the star of the show, he's ably supported by a stellar cast including Mark Linn-Baker, Mary Testa, and Lewis J. Stadlen. This comic romp, fine-tuned to perfection, brings the audience to its feet, and takes them back to a time when comedy was neither scathing nor cynical, just funny.

VISA



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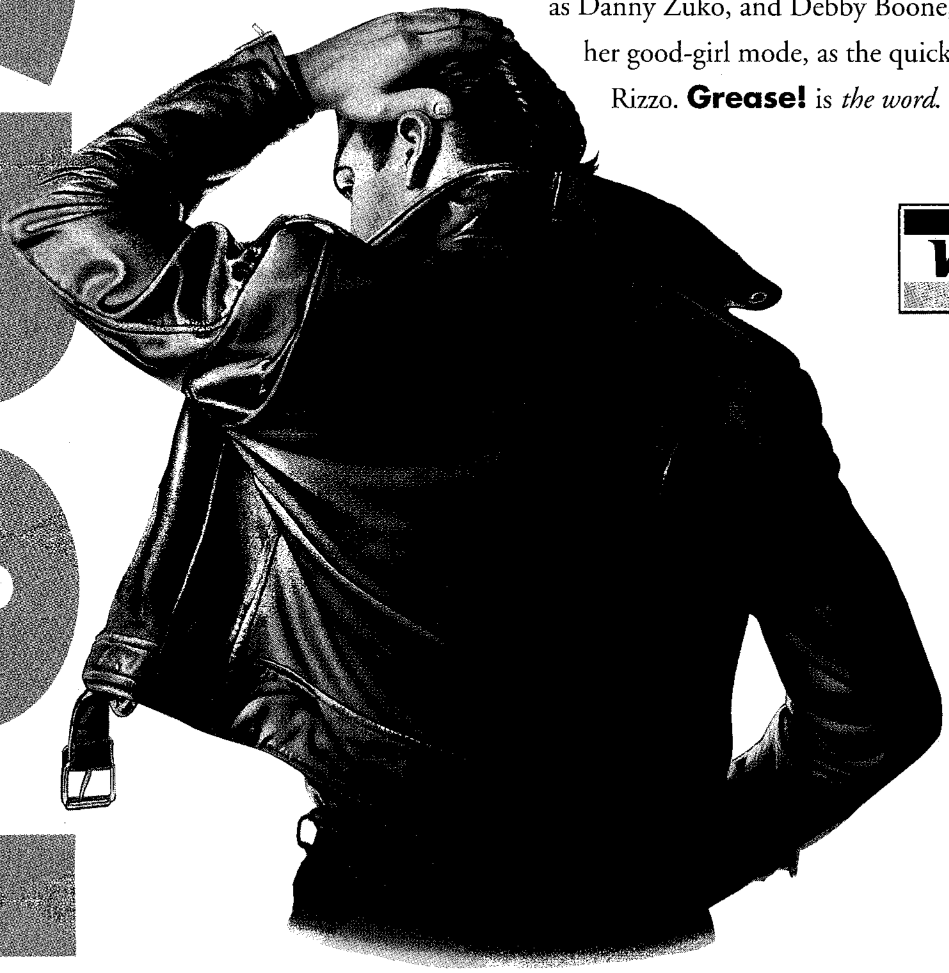
Grease!

Grease!

Rock and Roll is king in this fun-loving musical set in the Fifties where boy meets girl, boy becomes embarrassed of girl, girl has a makeover, and boy gets over his embarrassment. Along the way there's a drag race, a pajama party, lots of dancing, and enough memorable music that you leave the theatre humming. **Grease!** is an American icon thanks to its original long run on Broadway and subsequent transformation into a hit film with a very popular John Travolta. In its newest incarnation, it's better than ever with choreography by Jeff Calhoun under the supervision of Broadway legend Tommy Tune. The spirited cast includes soap-star Joseph Barbara as Danny Zuko, and Debby Boone, breaking out of her good-girl mode, as the quick-quipping Betty Rizzo. **Grease!** is *the word.*

VISA



Grease!

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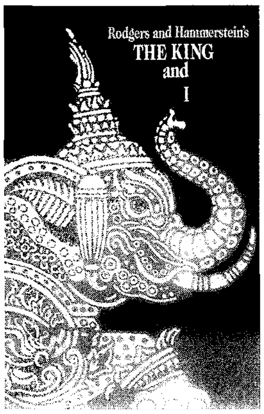
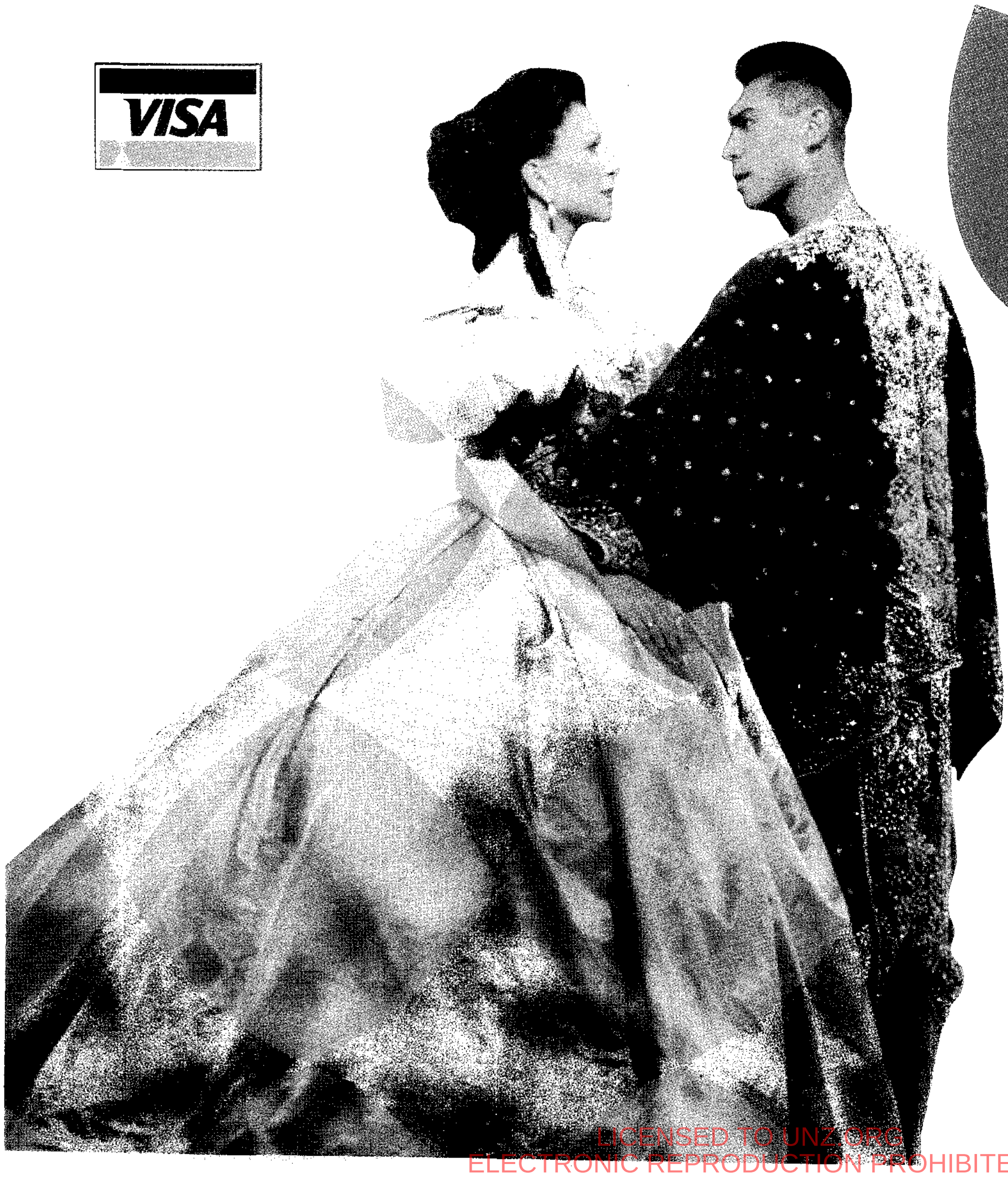
the king and I



Having won every award for Best Musical Revival this season, it's no puzzlement that Rodgers and Hammerstein's **The King And I** is a triumph all over again. The sets and costumes are riveting, an opulent return to a time when theatre was lavish, grand, and magically transporting. The two stars—two-time Tony Award-winner Donna Murphy as Anna and Lou Diamond Phillips as the stubborn King of Siam—display remarkable chemistry. The songs are every bit as fresh, engaging, and powerful as when they were first sung onstage forty-five years ago. The supporting players—the show has a cast of fifty-four—match the power of the leads, and the adorable children nearly steal the show.

VISA



It's been a decade since a musical won the Pulitzer Prize. Not since *A Chorus Line*—two decades ago—has a show won both the Pulitzer *and* the Tony Award for best musical. And it's been longer still since a musical's bittersweet success so won the public's heart that it brings veteran Broadway audiences and first-time theatergoers together…and to their feet. With its eclectic, timely score and vibrant cast of contemporary characters (inspired in equal parts by Puccini's *La Bohème* and New York City's East Village), **Rent** celebrates the simple truth that love has the power to make a triumph of every moment we live. That message was made all the more resonant by the unexpected death of author/composer Jonathan Larson just hours before **Rent**'s first performance—leaving us living proof that every life can be measured in love.

RENT

VISA

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smokey joe's cafe

Photo: Craig Schwartz/Jay Thompson

It's not theatre in the usual sense. There's no story, no plot, no message to ponder after you leave. What you get instead in Grammy-winning **Smokey Joe's Cafe** are forty truly memorable songs by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, belted out by nine performers who know how to rock and an onstage band that knows how to roll. Leiber and Stoller, in case the names don't quite ring a bell, all but owned the charts during the Fifties and early Sixties—or at least their songs did. They wrote hits for Elvis (*Jailhouse Rock, Hound Dog*) as well as the Drifters, the Coasters, and too many others to mention. The songs' intrinsic humor and the performers' energy, along with Jerry Zaks' direction and Joey McKneely's choreography, keep **Smokey Joe's Cafe** smokin' from start to rousing finish.

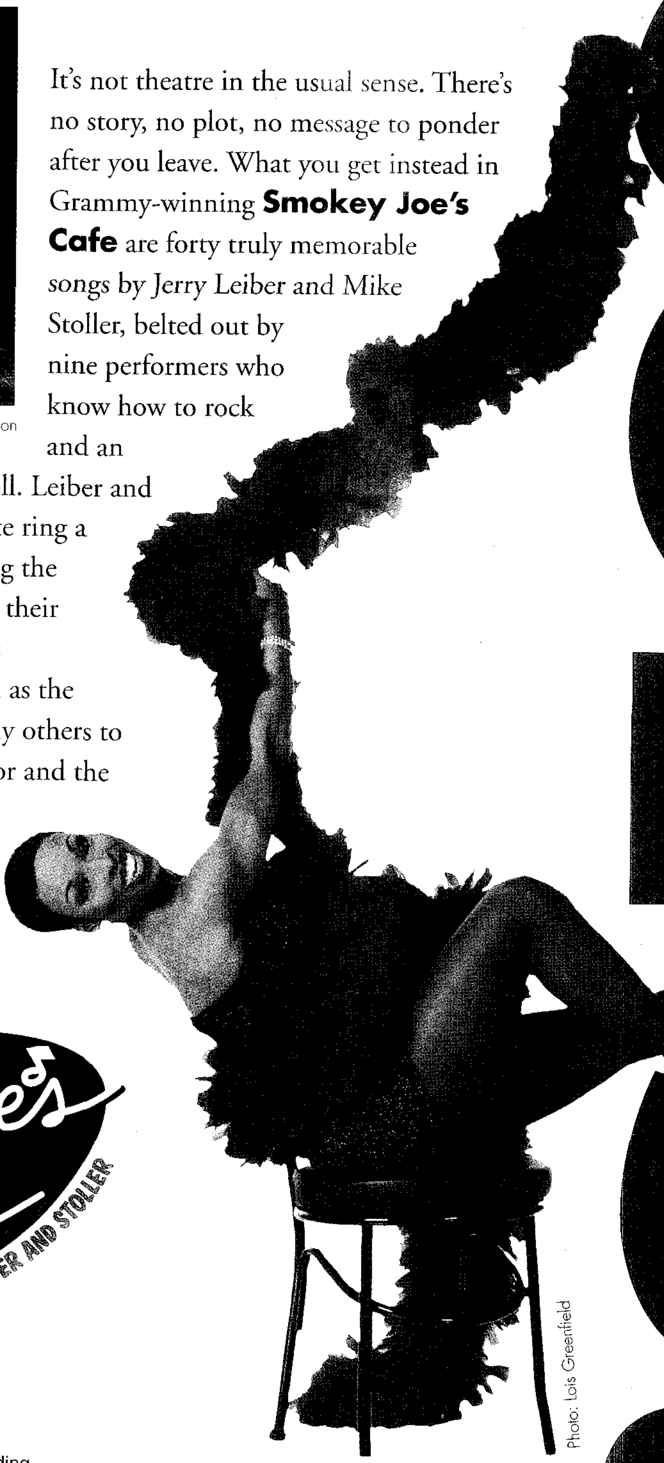
Photo: Lois Greenfield

Smokey Joe's cafe
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Photo by Dan Rest

Ingmar Bergman's *Madame de Sade*

Photo by Dan Rest

Orfeo ed Euridice, Baroque Opera

Though you might want to see Equestrian Theater one night and Baroque Opera the next,

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Photo by Lenny Bernstein

Don Byron, *Jazz: the Next Wave*

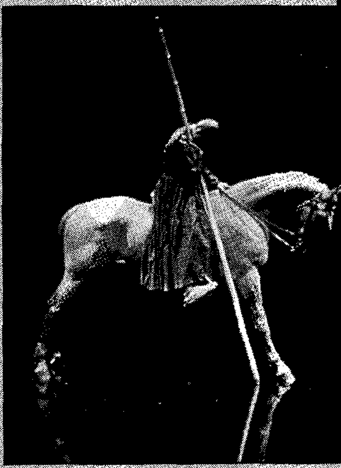

Photo by Marc Enguérand

Zingaro, Equestrian Theater

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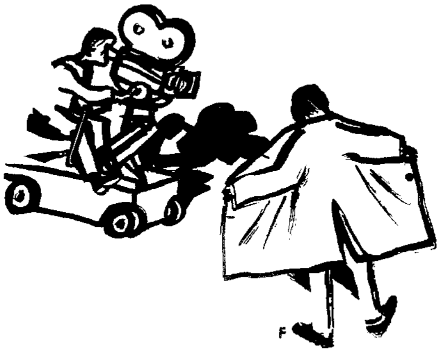
THE MOVIES



FILMS OPENING

Aventurera—The Mexican director Alberto Gout's 1949 musical melodrama, starring Ninón Sevilla as a well-brought-up young woman forced into prostitution and cabaret dancing. In Spanish. August 21-September 3. (Film Forum.)

Carpool—Tom Arnold stars as a carnival owner who kidnaps an advertising executive (David Paymer), in a comedy directed by Arthur Hiller. With Rhea Perlman and Rod Steiger. Opening August 23. (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Crow: City of Angels—Vincent Perez plays a young man who returns from the dead with remarkable powers, in a thriller directed by Tim Pope. Opening August 30.

First Kid—A comedy starring Sinbad as a Secret Service agent assigned to protect the President's teen-age son (Brock Pierce). Directed by David Mickey Evans. Opening August 30.

Foxfire—Annette Haywood-Carter's adaptation of Joyce Carol Oates's 1993 novel about four high-school students (Sarah Rosenberg, Hedy Burress, Jenny Lewis, and Jenny Shimizu) and their friendship with a young drifter (Angelina Jolie). Opening August 23. (Cinema II and Village East Cinemas.)

Girls Town—Reviewed below in Current Films.

The Green House—Claude Rich plays an old man in Nazi-occupied Paris who creates a fantasy world for his granddaughter (Salomée Stevenin) after her father is executed by the Germans. Directed by Philippe de Broca. In French. Opening August 30. (Quad Cinema.)

The Island of Dr. Moreau—John Frankenheimer's adaptation of H. G. Wells's 1896 novel, starring Marlon Brando as the scientist who crossbreeds human beings and animals. With David Thewlis, Val Kilmer, and Fairuza Balk. Opening August 23. (Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Madagascar Skin—A love story about a shy young gay man (John Hannah) and a straight older thief (Bernard Hill), written and directed by Chris Newby. Opening August 23. (Quad Cinema.)

She's the One—Writer-director Edward Burns follows up "The Brothers McMullen" with a film about two more brothers (Burns and Mike McGlone) and their troubles with women. Opening August 23.

Solo—Mario Van Peebles stars as a high-tech cyborg soldier on the loose in Latin America, in an action film directed by Norberto Barba. Opening August 23.

The Spitfire Grill—An ex-con (Alison Elliott) takes a job as a waitress in a small Maine town, in a drama written and directed by Lee David Zlotoff. Opening August 23. (Lincoln Square.)

The Stupids—Tom Arnold and Jessica Lundy play the parents of an odd family, in a comedy directed by John Landis. Written by Brent Forrester, based on the children's books by Harry Allard and James Marshall. Opening August 30.

The Trigger Effect—A thriller written and directed by David Koepp, about a suburban couple (Kyle MacLachlan and Elisabeth Shue) caught in the middle of a blackout. With Dermot Mulroney. Opening August 30.

A Very Brady Sequel—Shelley Long and Gary Cole are once again Carol and Mike, and Tim Matheson is Carol's long-lost husband, as life with the Bradys gets complicated. Directed by Arlene Sanford. Opening August 23. (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 1, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 52.)

Basquiat—Making his début as a movie director, the painter Julian Schnabel offers a fond portrait of his fellow-artist Jean Michel Basquiat, who died in 1988 from a heroin overdose—although, if this film is anything to go by, the cause of death was more likely an excess of celebrity in the bloodstream. Basquiat (Jeffrey Wright) went from a mock hobo existence to full-blown nineteen-eighties glamour without stopping at ordinary life, and it isn't hard to read his progress as a cautionary New York tale; the movie, however, is helplessly in love with him, and Schnabel never dreams of questioning his art. Still, if you want ironic distance you don't go to Julian Schnabel, and the picture's pleasures are mostly atmospheric—visionary surfers cruising the sky, Basquiat doodling in spilled syrup on a restaurant table. The film is best viewed as a freakish social comedy, its levity assured by a fine cast: the sweet-natured Wright, Benicio del Toro (forever strange) as Basquiat's best friend, and a suitably zonked David Bowie as Andy Warhol. (If you can't take the movie, buy the terrific, eclectic soundtrack instead.)—A.L. (8/19/96) (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

Emma—Douglas McGrath wrote and directed this charming, wrongheaded version of Jane Austen's great comedy of manipulation. Gwyneth Paltrow plays the heroine, and Jeremy Northam makes an absurdly young Mr. Knightley. He and Paltrow are a lovely couple, but McGrath replaces Austen's notion that love takes them by surprise—evolving, as it were, out of intellectual sparring—with easy romance. Ideal viewing for those who like to believe that Jane Austen was, above all, nice.—A.L. (8/5/96) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Girls Town—Lili Taylor is an underachieving unwed mother, Bruklin Harris a poet stuck in a strict home, and Anna Grace a bright teenager toying with delinquency, in Jim McKay's low-budget but ambitious look at a neglected subject—the coming-of-age of adolescent girls. The three women worked together for months to create a casual documentary naturalness; unfortunately, the script they came up with (in collaboration with McKay and Denise Casano) is awfully literal in its take on the brutalization of young women in this country. The movie starts out as a meandering improvisational exercise for the diabolically talented Taylor and two other promising actresses; by the end, it's a p.c. melodrama.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center; starting Aug. 21.)

John Carpenter's Escape from L.A.—This sequel to Carpenter's 1981 hit, "Escape from New York," feels more like a remake: the story elements are basically the same, and Kurt Russell, as Snake Plissken, the antihero with the Clint Eastwood whisper, doesn't seem to have aged at all. The plot—an earthquake-shaken Los Angeles has been turned into a prison for undesirables, and Russell must break in and out of it to retrieve a valuable government weapon—gives Carpenter plenty of opportunities to skewer West Coast stereotypes (surfers, Beverly Hills plastic surgeons) by organizing them into gangs that threaten Russell's mission. While the film is entertaining in its goofy way, Carpenter lacks the chops of a big action director, and many of the confrontations fall flat. Still, it's obvious that the actors are having a good time (especially Steve

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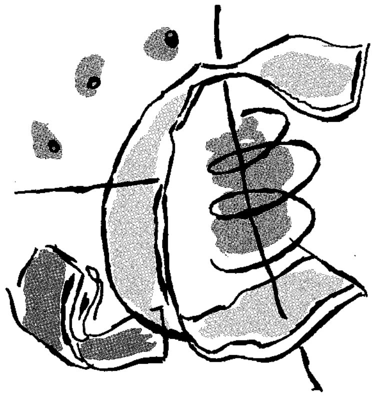
Buscemi, Stacy Keach, and Pam Grier, who plays a he/she named Hershe), and the L.A.-in-ruins sets are a lot of fun—they seem to have been punched by a mighty fist.—B.D. (Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Kansas City—Robert Altman's movie is set in the town where the director grew up—more specifically, in the jazz clubs that flourished there during the nineteen-thirties. Many of the usual Altman virtues are in evidence, not least the immaculate (though never pedantic) sense of period and the long, loosely knotted story line. An angry-looking broad named Blondie (Jennifer Jason Leigh) discovers that her husband, a petty crook, is being held by Seldom Seen (Harry Belafonte), a club proprietor and gangland chief. In retaliation, she kidnaps a politician's wife (Miranda Richardson) and drags her around the city, trailed by a small crowd of subplots. Belafonte offers a delicate demonstration of brute power, and the plot's mix of private obsession and grand political scheming should have been a winner. Unfortunately, the movie is killed by its two female leads—we ought to be rooting for them, but they seem to be involved in some twitch-and-frown competition of their own. It's a relief when they take a break and allow Altman to concentrate on the jazz; a frantic saxophone duel is the best thing in the film.—A.L. (8/19/96) (Coronet, 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Matilda—Danny DeVito has taken Roald Dahl's children's book—in which most of the authority figures are bestial and some of the children are bratty—and constructed a wicked movie that may make parents squirm but should delight kids. Mara Wilson plays a precocious little girl who irritates her parents (DeVito and Rhea Perlman, both hilarious) because she'd rather read than watch TV. When they finally let her go to school, she meets her nemesis, Miss Trunchbull (Pam Ferris), a monstrous principal who shot-puts children out of windows. DeVito's punchy, throw-that-camera-across-the-room style of moviemaking is just right for this loud, sloppy story. He and his scriptwriters, Nicholas Kazan and Robin Swicord, deliver a flamboyantly obnoxious film that, like Jim Carrey at his best, empowers kids, subverting the usual Disney conventions and letting anarchy win the day.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Gemini, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)



Rendezvous in Paris—Eric Rohmer's new film is a characteristically elegant diversion, consisting of three short stories about young lovers in Paris. The movie follows these characters as they explore the inexhaustible city, each of them winding up, as Rohmer's people so often do, in a kind of romantic cul-de-sac. The seventy-six-year-old filmmaker has made it his peculiar business, over the years, to dramatize the pleasures of unconsummated love, and this picture demonstrates—in triplicate—that no one makes nothing happen more seductively. While Rohmer strolls through Paris, musing on the tricky interplay of chance and design, he's also pondering the erotic possibilities of melancholy: he somehow manages to turn a graceful urban travelogue into a witty, moving essay on pre-coital tristesse. With Clara Bellar, Antoine Basler, Aurore Rauscher, Serge Renko, Michaël Kraft, and Bénédicte Loyen. In French.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Small Faces—This vibrant film by the Scottish brothers Billy and Gillies MacKinnon (they collaborated on the screenplay, with Gillies directing) has the kick and the gritty visual power of a "Mean Streets." The seemingly autobiographical story concerns the coming-of-age of three adolescent brothers (Iain Robertson, Joseph McFadden, and J. S. Duffy) involved with Glaswegian gangs in 1968. The camera work is grippingly intense—every gray, cobblestoned street looks menacing—and the little-known actors give nuanced, startling performances (Robertson, as the youngest brother, is devastatingly good). Despite a contrived happy ending, it's a wonder of a film.—B.D. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

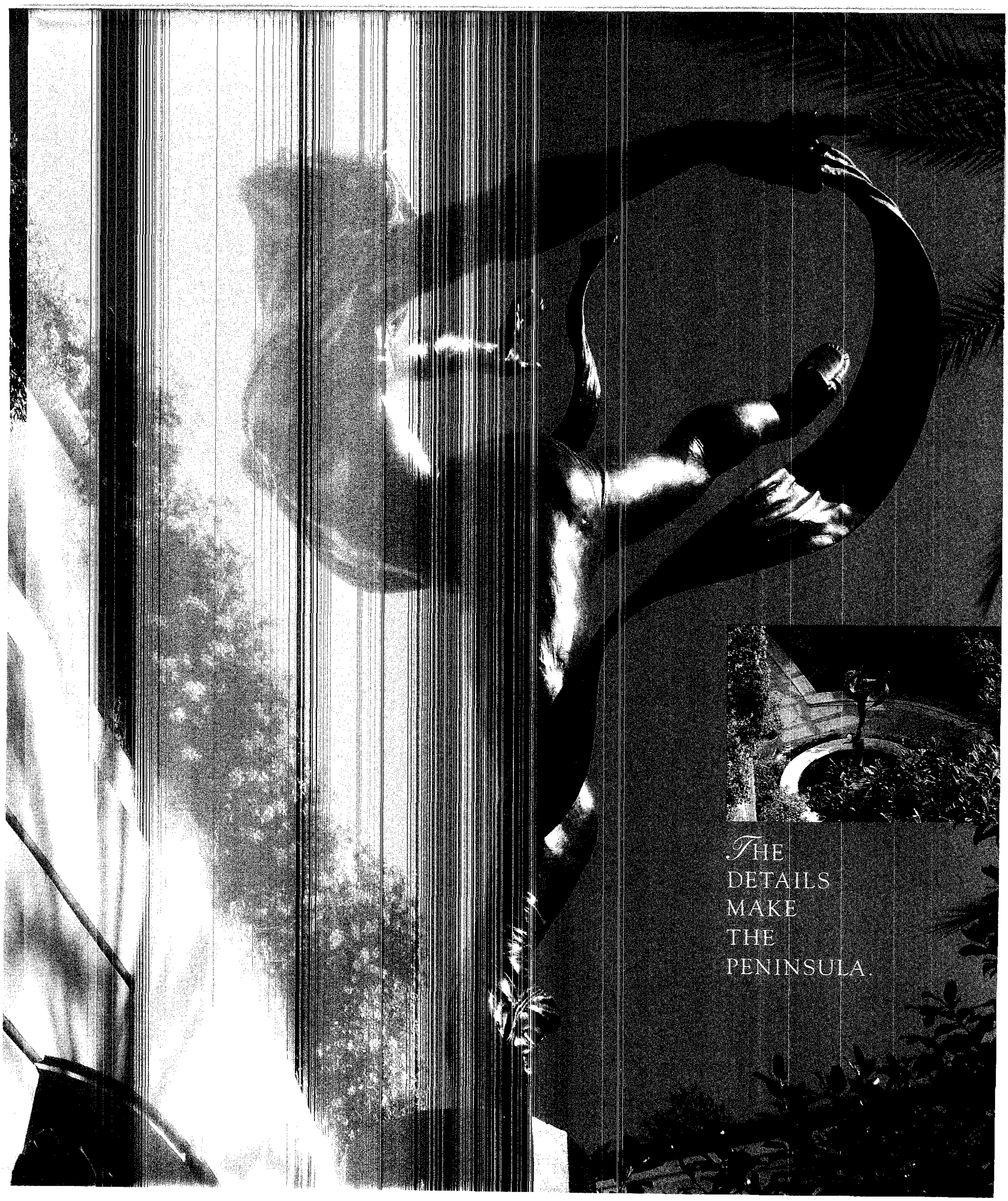
A Time to Kill—Joel Schumacher's Deep South courtroom thriller has the solemn tone of a Stanley Kramer social-problem drama. The script—by Akiva Goldsman, from a John Grisham novel—follows a young white lawyer (Matthew McConaughey) as he defends a black man (Samuel L. Jackson) accused of murdering a couple of rednecks. The movie inflates Grisham's modest, perceptive portrait of a Mississippi town into a smug lecture on race relations; what the hero and all the other sweat-soaked characters really need is central air-conditioning, but what they get is an overpowering blast of homiletic hot air.—T.R. (7/29/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Tin Cup—Ron Shelton's new movie is, of all things, a romantic comedy about golf. Kevin Costner plays Roy (Tin Cup) McAvoy, a once promising golfer who now runs a seedy West Texas driving range. The appearance at the lesson tee of a witty, leggy psychotherapist named Molly Griswold (Rene Russo) rouses him from his cozy stupor of underachievement: the way to impress her, he decides, is to qualify for the U.S. Open, and win it. His path to the Open is erratic, but his go-for-it style of courtship is mighty effective with Molly, who is unused to being gone for so recklessly. Shelton, who directed Costner in the 1988 baseball classic "Bull Durham," gets another terrific comic performance out of him here, and Russo makes a wonderful sparring partner. The movie is relaxed, funny, unpredictable, and very sexy. The sensational supporting cast includes Cheech Marin, Don Johnson, and Linda Hart. (A number of touring pros and golf broadcasters play themselves.) Screenplay by Shelton and John Norville.—T.R. (8/12/96) (Baronet, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Trainspotting—Why should people looking for a good time see a film about skinny, cynical heroin addicts in Edinburgh? Because the junkies themselves are having such a good time that what sounds grungy and depressing turns out to be weirdly uplifting. The performances feel driven and unashamed, and, though the film sells you short on plot, it makes you ravenous for the next visual fix. But in the end this approach becomes exhausting: you may yield to the film's verve while still praying that it will all be over soon. Directed by Danny Boyle.—A.L. (7/22/96) (Angelika Film Center, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and State. . . . ¶ Cinema II; through Aug. 22.)

The Wife—Repulsive. Tom Noonan, the writer and director, and Julie Hagerty team as Jack and Rita, pretentious New Age therapists. Wallace Shawn and Karen Young play Cosmo, a client of theirs, and Arlie, his sociopathic wife. Jack takes joy in ignoring and degrading Rita; Arlie humiliates Cosmo. It's all supposed to be a sendup of New Age practices, but it's really no more than a portrait of two somewhat decent people married to reptiles.—S.K. (The Screening Room.)

WARD SCHUMAKER



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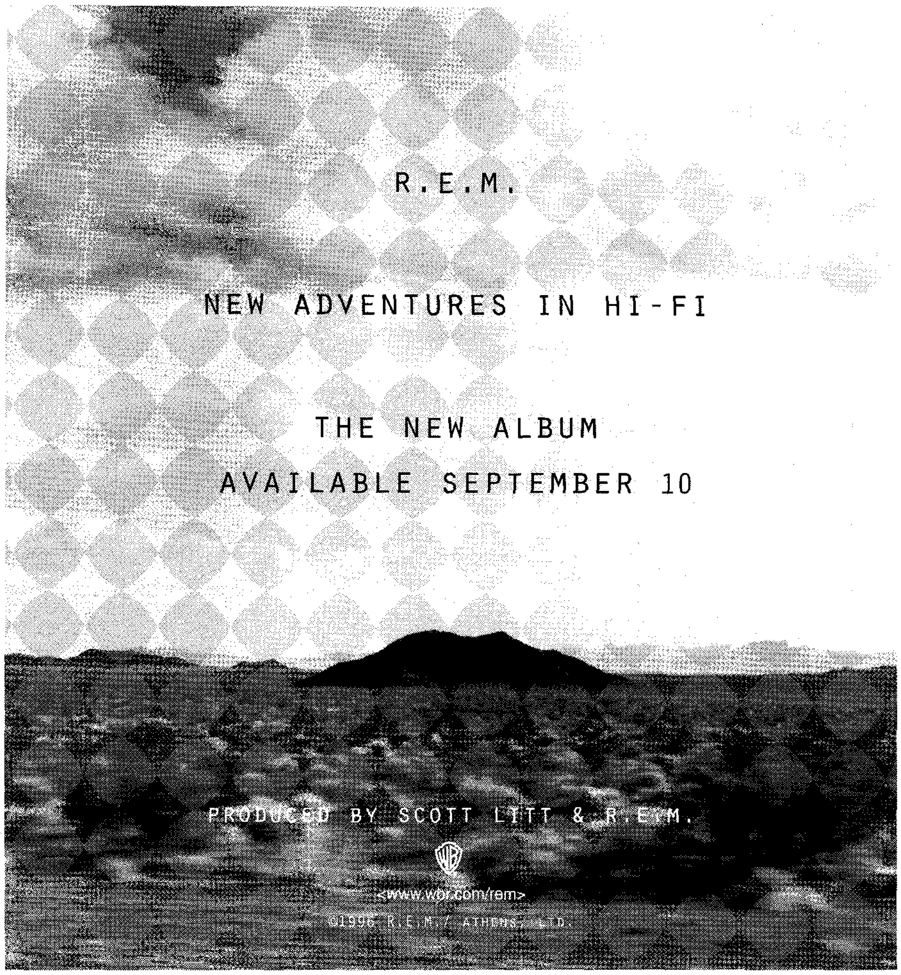
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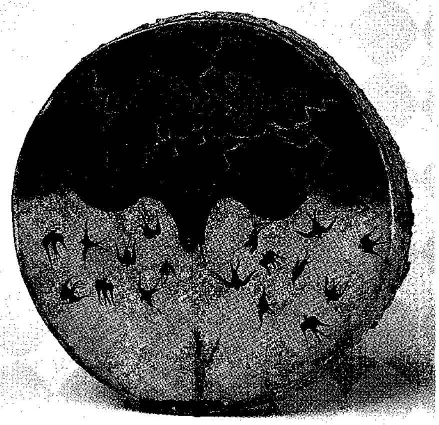

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ALSO PLAYING

ALASKA: Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Showplace, and Gemini. . . . **THE FAN:** Criterion Center, Gemini, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **HOUSE ARREST:** 86th Street East Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, State, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **INDEPENDENCE DAY** (reviewed in our issue of 7/15/96): Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th St. East, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld. . . . **JACK:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **PHENOMENON:** Cinema 3rd Avenue, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 3, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **TALES FROM THE CRYPT: BORDELLO OF BLOOD:** Art Greenwich Twin, 84th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 23rd St. West Triplex.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA 57, 225 W. 57th St.
ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BARONET, Third Ave. at 59th St.
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3, 2 W. 59th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St.
CORONET, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.
EMBASSY I, Broadway at 46th St.
EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GEMINI, Second Ave. at 64th St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
MANHATTAN TWIN, Third Ave. at 59th St.
METRO CINEMA I AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NATIONAL TWIN, Broadway at 44th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St.
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
REGENCY, Broadway at 67th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd St.
34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.

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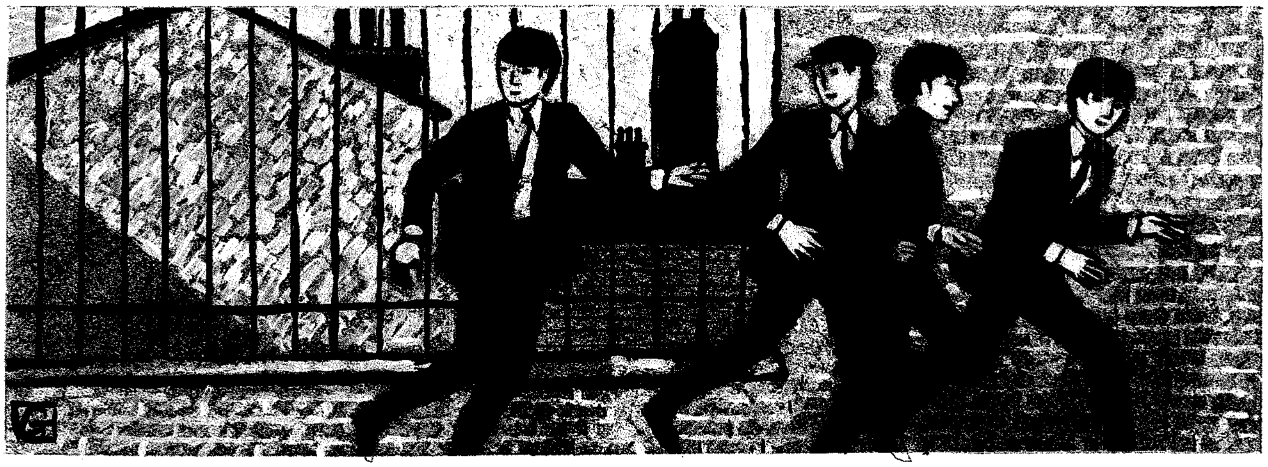
REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Barabbas (1962)—Anthony Quinn has tremendous reserves of power in this offbeat Biblical epic about the violent bandit who, on the brink of execution, is freed in place of Jesus and spends the rest of his life wondering why fate intertwined him with the Messiah. As this clenched, volatile character, Quinn projects an aura at once weary and wary; his ornery dignity gives Barabbas's pattern of making every wrong move yet still approaching redemption the immediacy of a modern antihero's odyssey. Problems of dubbing and pacing and a lack of variety weigh the movie down, but Christopher Fry's pointed and intelligent free adaptation of Pär Lagerkvist's 1950 novel resists grandiloquence. And, under Richard Fleischer's direction, the cinematographer, Aldo Tonti, and the production designer, Mario Chiari, imbue the imagery with a mournful grandeur, doing imaginative work both in the terse, expressionist renderings of torture and crucifixion and in the spectacular gladiator sequences, which rival the ones in "Spartacus." Jack Palance plays the man to beat in the Roman games—the Colosseum proves the rare arena vast enough to contain his gloating laughter. The more restrained supporting players include Ernest Borgnine, Harry Andrews, and Vittorio Gassmann.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 25 and Sept. 2.)



At the Walter Reade Theatre, the Beatles in Richard Lester's "A Hard Day's Night."

JEAN-CLAUDE GÖTTING

A Hard Day's Night (1964)—A satiric celebration of anarchic youth and the blast of oxygen they give a wheezing kingdom. The director, Richard Lester, and the screenwriter, Alun Owen, set out to show how the Beatles' phenomenal fame encased them in a cocoon. But the Fab Four aren't larvae—they're brilliant butterflies, and they have an unsurpassed rapport with their fans and the movie audience, too. Lester directs fearlessly, shooting them every which way to capture their antic poetry; he devised strategies for making rock visual that music-video directors have been stealing for decades.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 30 and Sept. 1.)

Invaders from Mars (1953)—It's an ideal first science-fiction film for grade-schoolers, who inevitably put themselves in the place of the child hero (Jimmy Hunt), a science aficionado whose lack of pretension and gush keeps him from coming off as a nerd. After he spots a spaceship touching down in the hills just beyond his back yard, he tries to warn the authorities that the Martians have landed and are turning the neighbors into slaves by a mysterious process that leaves a scar on the back of the neck. When he's struggling to convince the cops, the film becomes Kafka for kids; it holds up as a divertissement because of the humorous, haunting incongruity between fifties Middle America and the alien spaceship. The director, William Cameron Menzies (the legendary production designer of "Gone with the Wind"), emulates Norman Rockwell's tones and compositions, then twists them, creating a "Twilight Zone" atmosphere: a sense of catastrophe hovers over this settled, seemingly impregnable world. Some of the effects are chintzy—the Martians' mutant helpers look like frogmen (you can even see the zippers on their backs). But Menzies' creepy-clever inventiveness covers up the shortcomings. His suggestions of people falling into a whirling sand pit are eerier than anything in Tobe Hooper's 1986 remake. So is his Martians' heat ray, which causes walls to swell and pop as if they had a galloping outbreak of acne. With Leif Erickson, Hillary Brooke, Helena Carter, and Arthur Franz. Script by Richard Blake.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; Aug. 21-22.)

Lolita (1962)—Wild, marvellously enjoyable comedy, adapted from Nabokov's novel. James Mason is the lover of little girls, the smiling, obsequious, phony Humbert Humbert; Shelley Winters is Charlotte Haze, the culture vulture rampant; Sue Lyon is her sexy daughter, Lolita; and Peter Sellers (at his most inspired) is Quilty, Humbert Humbert's walking paranoia. Stanley Kubrick directed.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Aug. 24.)

Samson and Delilah (1949)—De Mille, with God as his co-maker. In general, the plot follows the Bible story, though Victor Mature's Samson, costumed in terry-cloth leotards and a monstrous wig, looks bilious and flaccid, as if he couldn't pull down even the papier-mâché temple. He does it, though, and he also wrestles a moth-eaten lion and crowns several extras with the jawbone of an ass. Hedy Lamarr's Delilah would be more at home in a Yorkville bar than in a high-toned Philistine residence. All in all, this film does not enhance the glory of De Mille or his Associate; its splendors are purely in the camp division.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 24 and Aug. 27.)

We Were Strangers (1949)—Although its heroic (if anguished) portrayal of political terrorism earns it extra credit for ambition, this John Huston film about Cuban freedom fighters of the early thirties is an exercise in futility. Huston and his co-writer, Peter Viertel (adapting an episode from Robert Sylvester's book "Rough Sketch"), daringly center on a claustrophobic effort—a handful of rebels tunnelling into the aristocratic section of a cemetery in order to blow up a high official's funeral. But instead of building excitement by staying close to the action the filmmakers segue into unresolved discussions of morality and justice and an unsatisfying romance between the working-class Havana heroine (Jennifer Jones) and the Miamified hero (John Garfield); then they short-circuit the adventure and its aftermath altogether. The dialogue combines Hemingway at his most tough-guy laconic with Steinbeck at his most proletarian Biblical. Still, there are a number of impressive sequences: the opening display of senators caving in to conservative pressure, which Huston turns into a circle dance of intimidation; splashes of street violence which have a matter-of-fact horror. The most moving aspect of the film is the casting of veteran Latin stars such as Gilbert Roland, magnetic as a revolutionary dockhand, and Pedro Armendariz, who boasts a Wellesian intensity as the state's enforcer.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 28-29.)

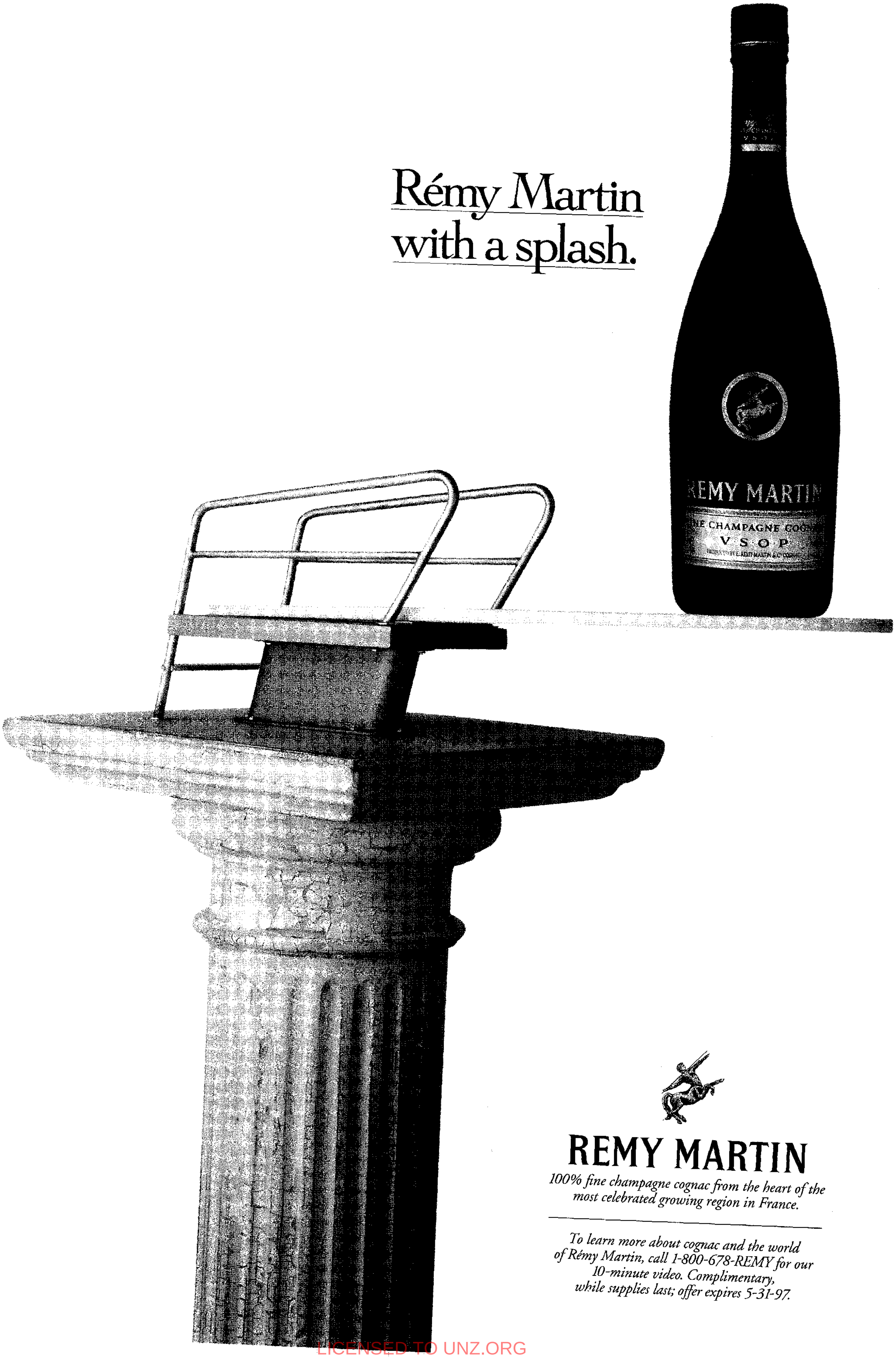
LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Aug. 21-22: "The Five Thousand Fingers of Dr. T." (1953, Roy Rowland) and "Invaders from Mars" (†). . . . Aug. 23-24: "House on Haunted Hill" (1958, William Castle) and "The Fly" (1958, Kurt Neuman). . . . Aug. 25: "The Shining" (1980, Stanley Kubrick). . . . Aug. 26: "Nosferatu" (1922, F. W. Murnau) and "Nosferatu the Vampyre" (1979, Werner Herzog). . . . Aug. 27-28: "Mad Max" (1979, George Miller) and "Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior" (1981, Miller). . . . Aug. 29: "Panic in the Year Zero!" (1962, Ray Milland) and "X—The Man with X-Ray Eyes" (1963, Roger Corman). . . . Aug. 30-31: "The Trip" (1967, Corman) and "Psych-Out" (1968, Richard Rush). . . . Sept. 1-2: "The Big Cube" (1969, Tito Davison) and "Skidoo" (1968, Otto Preminger). . . . Sept. 3: "Blue Sunshine" (1977, Jeff Lieberman).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—A program of recent films from Hong Kong, all in Cantonese. Aug. 21 and Aug. 31: "The Magic Crane" (Benny Chan). . . . Aug. 22: "Somebody Up There Likes Me" (Patrick Leung). . . . Aug. 23: "Organized Crime and Triad Bureau" (Che Kirk). . . . Aug. 24 and Sept. 3: "My Father Is a Hero" (Cory Yuen). . . . Aug. 25: "Summer Snow" (Ann Hui). . . . Aug. 26 and Aug. 30: "From Beijing with Love" (Wong Jing). . . . Aug. 27: "City Cop" (Herman Yau). . . . Aug. 28 and Sept. 2: "The Saint of Gamblers" (Jing). . . . Aug. 29: "High Risk" (Jing). . . . Sept. 1: "Wing Chun" (Yuen Wo-ping).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A showing of films from the museum's Martin Scorsese Collection. Aug. 22 at 2:30: "Jason and the Argonauts" (1963, Don Chaffey). . . . Aug. 22 at 6 and Aug. 27 at 2:30: "The Pit and the Pendulum" (1961, Roger Corman). . . . Aug. 22 at 8 and Aug. 23 at 2:30: "The Tomb of Ligeia" (1965, Corman). . . . Aug. 23 at 6: "Demetrius and the Gladiators" (1954, Delmer Daves). . . . Aug. 23 at 8 and Sept. 2 at 12:30: "David and Bathsheba" (1951, Henry King). . . . Aug. 24 at 2 and Sept. 3 at 6: "The Robe" (1953, Henry Koster). . . . Aug. 24 at 5 and Aug. 27 at 6: "Samson and Deli-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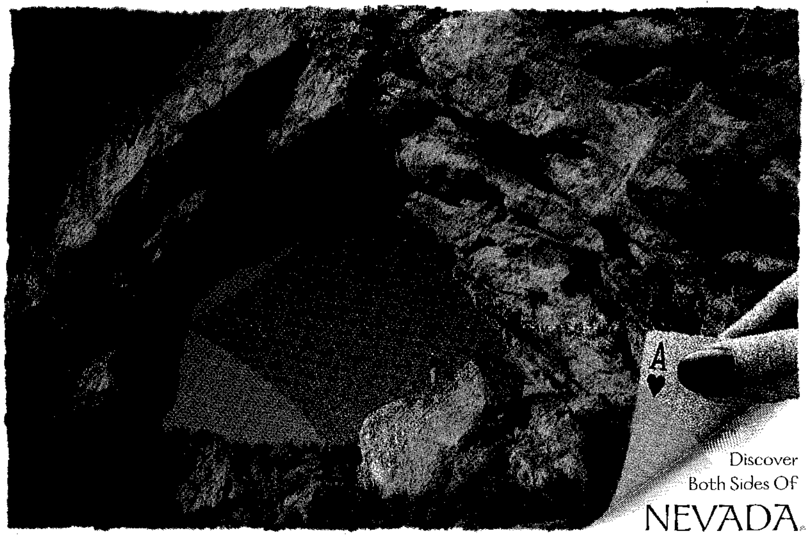

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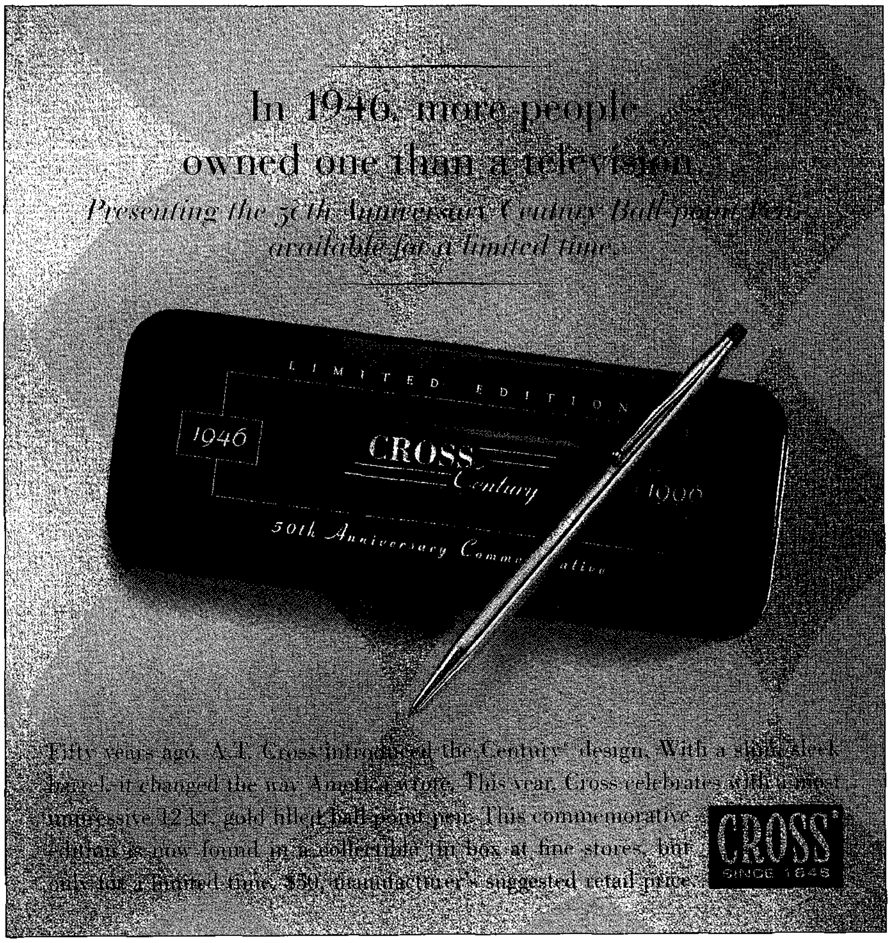

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lah" (†). . . . Aug. 25 at 2 and Sept. 3 at 2:30: "The Egyptian" (1954, Michael Curtiz). . . . Aug. 25 at 5 and Sept. 2 at 5: "Barabbas" (†). . . . Aug. 26 at 2:30: "The House of Usher" (1960, Corman). . . . Aug. 26 at 6 and Sept. 2 at 3: "Land of the Pharaohs" (1955, Howard Hawks). . . . Aug. 29 at 2:30 and Aug. 31 at 5: "Sodom and Gomorrah" (1962, Robert Aldrich). . . . Aug. 29 at 6: "The Agony and the Ecstasy" (1965, Carol Reed). . . . Aug. 30 at 2 and Sept. 1 at 1: "The Greatest Story Ever Told" (1965, George Stevens). . . . Aug. 30 at 6 and Sept. 1 at 5: "Alexander the Great" (1956, Robert Rossen). . . . Aug. 31 at 1: "El Cid" (1961, Anthony Mann).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—A program of films starring John Garfield. Aug. 21 at 2 and 6:15: "Air Force" (1943, Howard Hawks). . . . Aug. 21 at 4:30: "Tortilla Flat" (1942, Victor Fleming). . . . Aug. 21 at 8:45: "The Sea Wolf" (1941, Michael Curtiz). . . . Aug. 22 at 2 and 6:15: "Out of the Fog" (1941, Anatole Litvak). . . . Aug. 22 at 4 and 8:15: "Daughters Courageous" (1939, Curtiz). . . . Aug. 23 at 2 and 6:15 and Aug. 24 at 4 and 8: "The Postman Always Rings Twice" (1946, Tay Garnett). . . . Aug. 23 at 4:15 and 8:15 and Aug. 24 at 6 and 10: "The Fallen Sparrow" (1943, Richard Wallace). . . . Aug. 25 at 4 and 8:15 and Aug. 27 at 2: "Between Two Worlds" (1944, Edward A. Blatt). . . . Aug. 25 at 6:15 and Aug. 27 at 4:15: "Saturday's Children" (1940, Vincent Sherman). . . . Aug. 26 at 2 and 7: "Nobody Lives Forever" (1946, Jean Negulesco). . . . Aug. 26 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Thank Your Lucky Stars" (1943, David Butler). . . . Aug. 28 at 2, 6, and 9:30 and Aug. 29 at 4 and 6:30: "We Were Strangers" (†). . . . Aug. 28 at 4:15 and 8 and Aug. 29 at 2 and 9: "He Ran All the Way" (1951, John Berry). . . . ¶ Aug. 24-25 at 2: "Cool Running" (1993, John Turteltaub). . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 2 and 8 and Sept. 1 at 7:45: "A Hard Day's Night" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 4 and 9:45: "The Girl Can't Help It" (1956, Frank Tashlin). . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 6:15 and Aug. 31 at 4 and 8:30: "Festival" (1967, Murray Lerner). . . . ¶ Aug. 31-Sept. 1 at 2: "Charlie Chan at the Olympics" (1937, H. Bruce Humberstone). . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 6:15 and Sept. 1 at 5:45: A compilation of rock-music videos by performers from the fifties to 1980. . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 4 and 9:30: "Creedence Clearwater Revival at the Albert Hall" (1970). . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 2 and 6:15: "Sign o' the Times" (1987, Prince). . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 4 and 8:15: "The Reggae Movie" (1995, Randy Rovins). . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 2 and 6:45: "Rust Never Sleeps" (1979, Bernard Shakey). . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 4:15 and 9: "Tonite Let's All Make Love in London" (1967, Peter Whitehead).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—A program of films directed by Stanley Kubrick. Aug. 24 at 2: "Lolita" (†). . . . Aug. 24 at 5: "Dr. Strangelove" (1963). . . . Aug. 25 at 2: "Paths of Glory" (1957). . . . Aug. 25 at 4: "Full Metal Jacket" (1987). . . . Aug. 31 at 2: "A Clockwork Orange" (1971). . . . Aug. 31 at 4:30: "The Shining" (1980). . . . Sept. 1 at 2: "Barry Lyndon" (1975).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Aug. 27 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "L'Atalante" (1934, Jean Vigo; in French).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing. The feature on the final program of the season, Aug. 26, will be "The Sound of Music" (1965, Robert Wise). (Rain date is the following night.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—A program of African films. Aug. 27 at 3 and Aug. 28 at 6:30: "Black Girl" (1965, Ousmane Sembène; Senegal). . . . Aug. 27 at 6:30 and Aug. 28 at 3: "Finzan" (1990, Cheick Oumar Sissoko; Mali).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Aug. 25 at 7, the feature will be "High School Confidential" (1958, Jack Arnold); on Sept. 1 at 7, "All About Eve" (1950, Joseph L. Mankiewicz).

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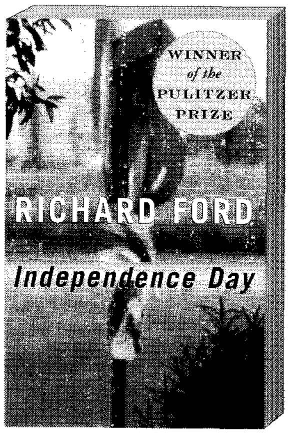
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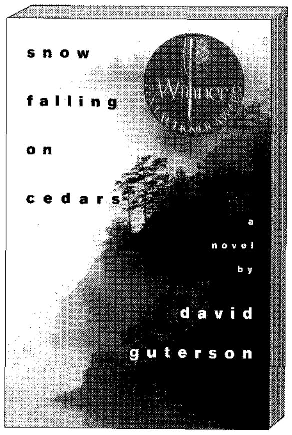
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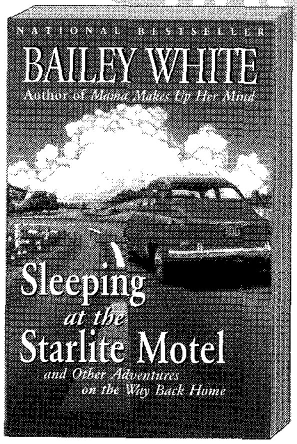
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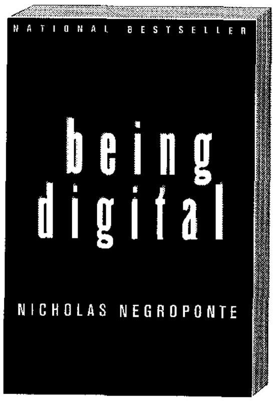
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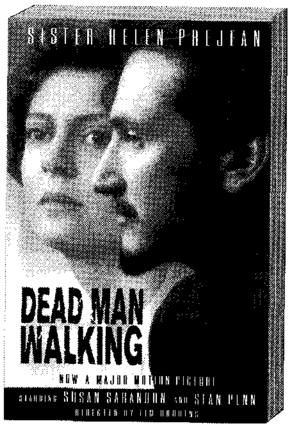
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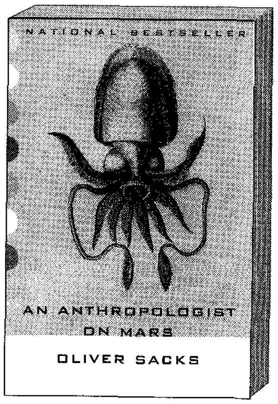
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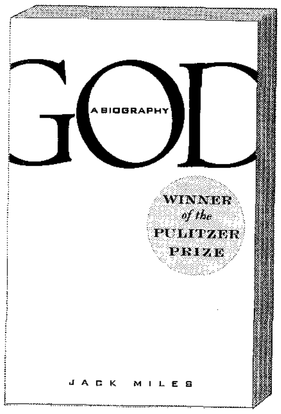
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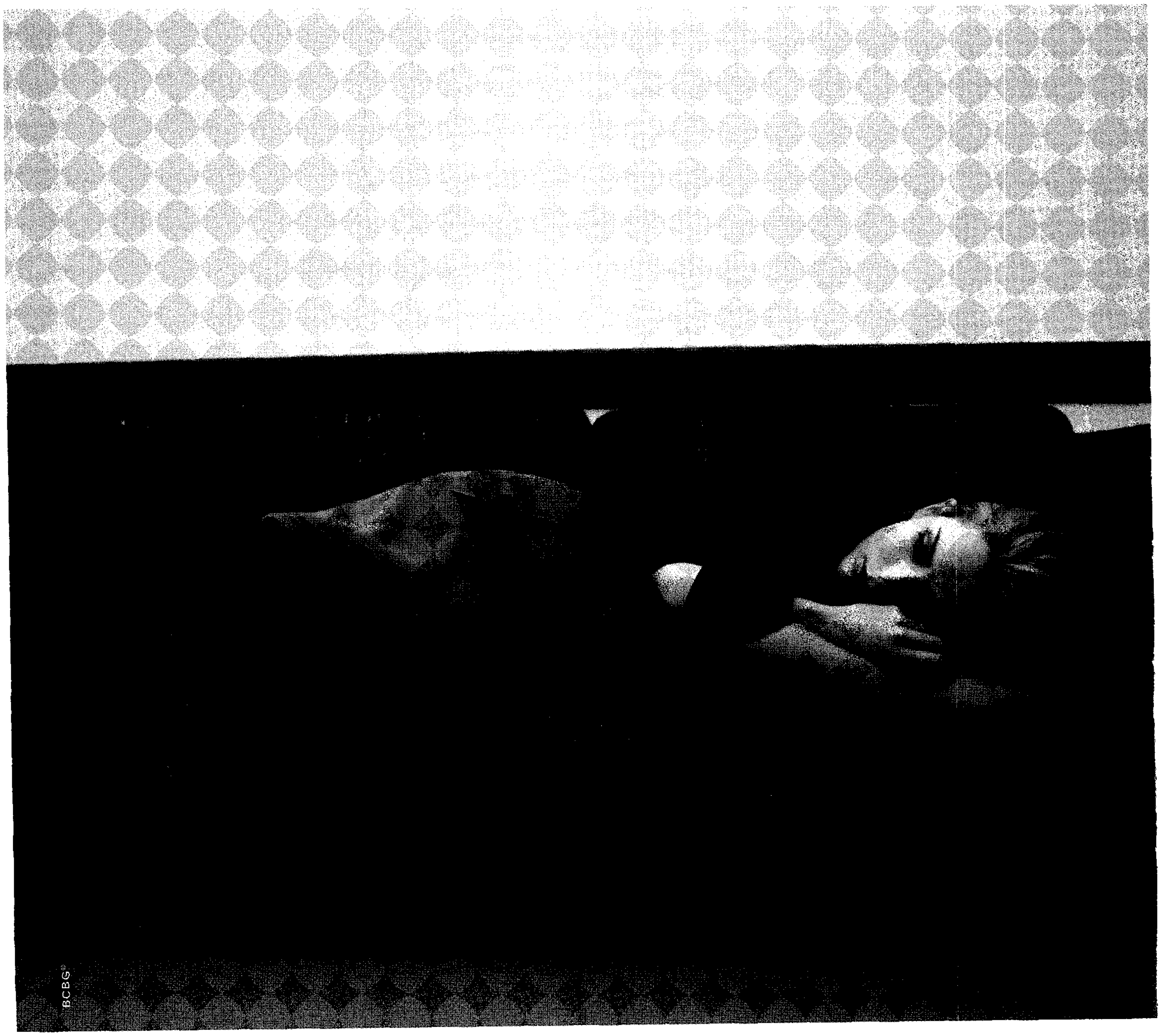

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE MUCKRAKER OF SYMPHONY HALL

MOST people suppose that classical music is a genteel, dignified business, carried out by nice people with nice manners. The British journalist Norman Lebrecht has made it his mission to prove that the business is in fact a sewer of greed and depravity, distinguishable from its vulgar pop sister only by its pretensions and secrecy. Every Monday morning, when Lebrecht's column appears in the *Daily Telegraph*, artists and record-industry executives quail, dreading that their latest deal or their personal foibles will be exposed. Now Lebrecht has condensed ten years of dirt-digging into a massive earthwork of a book called "When the Music Stops . . . Managers, Maestros and the Corporate Murder of Classical Music." It has created a furor in Britain and will likely have the same effect here when it is published by Birch Lane early next year, for many of its villains are New Yorkers.

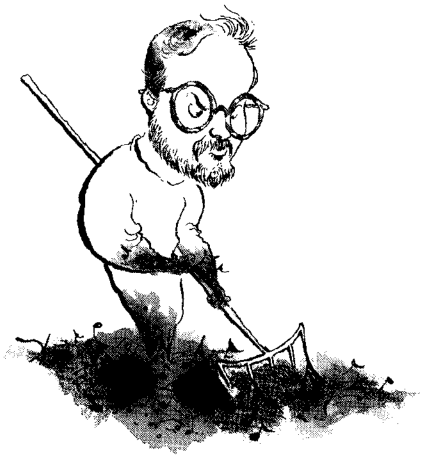
The thesis of "When the Music Stops," simply put, is that managerial ineptitude has allowed the audience for classical music to wither away while greedy artists and agents plunder what loot is left. The arch-fiends of the Lebrechtian scenario are the late *Übermaestro* Herbert von Karajan and his close associate Ronald Wilford, the president of Columbia Artists Management Inc. Lebrecht calls Wilford "the most powerful musical figure in the United States for thirty years," and the "hidden hand" behind much of what goes on at the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, and other major American musical institutions.

According to Lebrecht, an ironic, affable forty-eight-year-old with big, owlish spectacles, Wilford seized control of CAMI's powerful conducting division in 1961 by calling an emergency meeting while its newly appointed director was headed for California. Someone at that meeting said that the director was "a well-known homosexual," and it was urged that the conducting division "should not be entrusted to '*one of them*.' " When the man returned from California, he found Wilford sitting at his desk.

There are plenty more stories, about everybody from Battle to Barenboim. Yet Lebrecht sees himself not as a highbrow Suzy but as the provider of a public service. He believes that the only possible outcome of the graying of the audience and skyrocketing artists' fees is "catastrophe." He asserts that many orchestras "are now trembling on the brink of closure." It is hardly surprising, given such remarks, that Lebrecht has been accused of a certain degree of malice. In its review of "When the Music Stops," the *New Statesman* wrote that Lebrecht "apparently delights in character assassination, vituperative commentary, and malignant gossip."

While Lebrecht's victims often complain that he is inaccurate, he has never been proved to have got things altogether wrong, though he has published a number of retractions, and the *Telegraph* has settled a lawsuit out of court. "Look, I write close to the edge," he says. "Not to the edge of truth, but to the edge of what is permissible by the very, very stringent British libel laws. I've made it a principle to back everything by three sources, because people lie in this business more than anything I've ever encountered."

After the book's high radioactivity level made itself known, the British record industry's trade association issued a memo advising members on how to respond to press inquiries about the book. According to Lebrecht, "The correct response was 'Yes, there are difficulties; no, there is no crisis.' " On the day the memo came out, a powerful figure in that association was sitting next to Lebrecht at dinner and said to him, "Of course we're in dead trouble, but we don't want the public or our pop bosses to know."



Norman Lebrecht

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

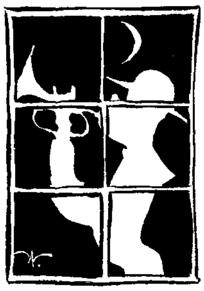
PAYING ATTENTION

Recently, Elliott Carter, the dean of American composers, remarked on the difficulties of achieving "personality" in serious musical composition. Paul Griffiths paid a call on the eighty-seven-year-old composer and asked him to expand on the matter. This is what Carter had to say:

MY beginnings as a composer started with a deep fascination with the avant-garde, but when I came to study I changed tack and started composing in the general neoclassical manner of the thirties. As a result, I was regarded as having little personality. When I altered again, at the beginning of the fifties, and returned to the ideas of the old avant-garde in my First String Quartet, my music was suddenly con-

IRVING BERLIN'S INSOMNIA

In 1945, as part of an unfinished memoir, Irving Berlin began jotting down the tale behind his patriotic revue "This Is the Army," which had opened on the Fourth of July in 1942.



The story behind "This Is the Army" is as good as the show itself. That story should be written, and I wish I could do it. Wilson Mizner, speaking of my limited vocabulary, once said, "Irving is a man of few words, but he keeps repeating them." Wilson might have added, "And he assembles them so they don't always make sense." That, however, hasn't stopped me from writing lyrics. But writing a book is quite different—the mere thought scares me, and for a very good reason: it's not my racket. I haven't the tools, to say nothing of the talent. But I have the material for such a book. So this is an attempt to set down the bits and pieces of that story.

When I received that little card from my draft board, in the early part of 1918, I was surprised—I had gone through two physical examinations, because the case history I gave them of my state of health called for a double checkup. Much has been written of my early struggles, when I was a singing waiter on the Bowery and in Chinatown. True, the life I led then was not one a family doctor would have prescribed for a growing boy, but my health was good. Not until after I became a successful songwriter did I develop all sorts of ailments—insomnia, indigestion, and all the by-products of what was known in the trade as composer's stomach. Many kinds of medicines were prescribed, which I would buy but never take. I kept going to one doctor for days and finally convinced him I had ulcers. He sent me to bed, where I was given a strict diet—the whites of eggs and cream at ten-minute intervals. After two weeks, he pronounced me cured; I got up feeling no better and no worse than I did before. Of course, my ills were mostly imagined, but I managed to leave the impression that a nervous breakdown was just around the corner. So when my draft board assured me there was nothing to worry about where my health was concerned, I was surprised. Joe Schenck was indignant. "It's ridiculous," he said. "What does the Army want with Irving?"

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I arrived in Camp Upton and was put through the usual routine of questions and checkups before they gave me a uniform. I remember little of that first day, but I will never forget that first night. Ten o'clock found me lying on an Army cot in the dark. The large wooden barracks was filled with dozens of men who would soon be asleep. As a civilian, I never went to bed before two in the morning. Up to then, I had taken it all in my stride. All day I was so busy being agreeable and doing what was asked of me in a manner that assured them I was going to be a good sport. Everyone was so nice and polite—this wasn't going to be bad at all. But lying there that night listening to the strange sounds that came from the other cots made me realize for the first time that I wasn't going to like Army life. My cot was in a corner, next to a window. I got up and looked out. A guard holding a rifle on his shoulder was pacing back and forth. I went back and stretched out on my cot again. The next few hours were the longest I ever spent in my life. Suddenly, I got very hungry—I knew it was one o'clock, because I always get hungry at that hour of the morning. I thought of my apartment in New York. The night before, some friends had been there for a farewell dinner. What was left of a turkey was still in the icebox. Nothing could have brought home the seriousness of my position more than the fact that I couldn't be in my kitchen at one in the morning. I have no idea what time I fell asleep, but I woke with a start and heard for the first time the bugler who was to become my pet aversion and the inspiration for "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning."

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sidered to have a real personal stamp—a matter that hadn't concerned me. I continued in the direction of that work, and from then on my music was greeted as highly personal.

It's hard for me to sort out what produces this impression. My pieces before the quartet—as much as my later pieces—exhibit a quality of attention, both to detail and to the larger frame. I could mention, too, a concern for musical resources used in a way that fits into my expressive intention—as in how I wrote, in 1947, for men's voices and piano in "Emblems"—and a desire to avoid mechanical repetition or other patterns that seem vacuous. Then, there is an effort to handle the elements of musical discourse, such as rhythm, harmony, and phrasing, in ways that help bring out my vision—ways that require, from both composer and listener, careful consideration and attentive awareness.

Nadia Boulanger, my teacher in Paris, paid deep attention to such matters, and my music is certainly meant to be heard by people who grasp what's happening. It seems to me that this is what life is about. You have to pay attention: if you don't, it's a mess. And this is true of older music, too: Brahms certainly expects you to pay attention. Now, this quality of attention is something that many people are not able to perceive in my music, so they call it intellectual. In my opinion, though, intellectual music is music in which the composer has not paid *any* attention to the flow but has filled in callously with a repeating pattern, and that worries me. My attention is also very much disturbed by something else that younger composers do—when they start a piece in a Romantic mood and then suddenly turn it into something that sounds like Edgard Varèse and produces a pointless non sequitur.

A piece of music has to have that magic, that sense that the whole thing has explored one world of experience or focussed on a particular attitude. Some of the early Stockhausen pieces, odd as they are, do have that, and works of Lutoslawski and Boulez have it. One of the things that make a piece of music engrossing is that it moves around in the terrain it has established at the beginning and yet maintains an unpredictability within its particular frame. But this is only one side of composition; the other side is that the music also awakens feelings and, like a story, draws the listener into its progress. It

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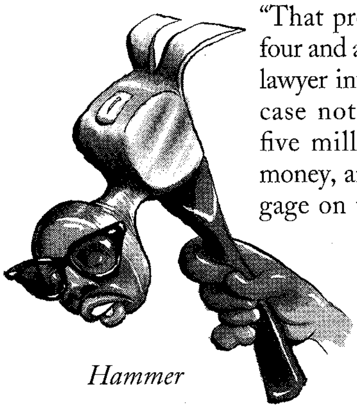
not only has to be sensuously interesting but also has to have a certain affective quality: sad, gay, lively, or some combination of feelings, making one comment on the other. Because it's consistent—because it carries you along—you pay attention.

UNDER THE HAMMER

The list of famous singers who have ended up in the debtors' court—Marvin Gaye, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Wayne Newton, among others—is a long and not entirely dishonorable one. Still, the latest addition to the roll call—Stanley Kirk Burrell, a.k.a. Hammer—is one of the most surprising. Nearly all of the big names were decades past their prime when they hit the skids, but it has been only six years since "Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em" sold as many as eighteen million copies and spent twenty-one weeks at the top of the *Billboard* charts. A private jet, movie offers, his own record-production company, even his own Saturday-morning cartoon ("Hammerman") all followed quickly for the spindly rapper. Other, cooler artists denounced him as "the Paula Abdul of rap" and worse, but the fleet-footed Hammer endorsed Pepsi and Taco Bell, wrote a theme tune for "The Addams Family," and picked up a shelfload of industry honors, including three Grammys. How, then, did the now thirty-four-year-old Hammer come to be sitting with his wife, Stephanie, in an Oakland courtroom earlier this summer as his lawyer told the judge, "The Burrells would rather be any place else but here today," and filed a voluntary petition for bankruptcy protection? The answer to that question provides a textbook explanation of what not to do if, by some chance, you go to bed one night and wake up a pop star.



Hammer

It is an old saying in the music industry that most acts are either poorer than you would think or richer than you could imagine. At the start of this decade, when Hammer's maddeningly catchy "U Can't Touch This" was the No. 1 single, he was firmly in the second category: according to *Forbes*, he earned thirty-three million dollars in 1990 and 1991. His third album, "Too Legit to Quit," was less successful, but it still sold more than a million copies, and it seems safe to assume that over the past six years his total income has been more than fifty million dollars. If Hammer had invested this money conservatively, he could now enjoy an annual income of between three and five million dollars for the rest of his life. Instead, he spent at least nine million dollars, and borrowed another $2.1 million, to convert a nondescript hill in an Oakland suburb into his personal Valhalla. His twelve-acre estate has two bowling alleys, an indoor pool, and one of the best security systems north of Malibu, but it is now on the market for $7.2 million. "That property is worth possibly four and a half million dollars," one lawyer involved in the bankruptcy case noted. "He's losing about five million dollars of his own money, and he can't pay his mortgage on the other $2.1 million." Unfortunately, Hammer's real-estate venture was probably the best investment he made. Despite his public image as a religious, socially conscious performer, Hammer lived in a manner befitting his newfound status as a major pop star. On tour, he travelled by private jet with an entourage of more than seventy. He stayed at the best hotels, gambled in Las Vegas, and bought seventeen cars. He even purchased racehorses, one of which finished third in the 1992 Kentucky Derby.

Back in his native Oakland, with financial backing from his label, Capitol Records, Hammer launched Bust It Productions, a music company that he hoped would turn him into the Berry Gordy of the nineties. But the new company failed to unearth a single successful act, and paying the wages of a handful of relatives and dozens of friends and associates proved a major drain. Sara MacDwyer, a lawyer whom Hammer owes nearly half a million dollars, recalls, "They were being paid substantial sums of money, they were given cars, and they were put on the payroll."

The fledgling firm's prospects were further damaged by a series of legal problems, including several charges of sexual harassment from female employees. The rap singer was not himself named in any of the sexual-harassment cases, but, according to his bankruptcy filing, he faces twenty-four other lawsuits in courtrooms from Maine to California. His suitors include business partners who claim that he reneged on written deals, musicians who accuse him of copyright infringement, and lawyers who say that he hasn't paid their bills.

In retrospect, Hammer's biggest error may have been his failure to entrust a savvy accountant or lawyer with his money and his contracts. Instead, he left the day-to-day management of his finances in the care of his elder brother, Louis Burrell, who had little formal business training. (Predictably, the two are now estranged.) When his fourth and fifth albums did badly, the shambolic nature of Hammer's finances became apparent. By 1995, already strapped for cash, he accepted a five-hundred-thousand-dollar loan from his friend Deion Sanders, the star cornerback. According to his bankruptcy filing, Hammer's debts total $13.7 million, compared with assets worth $9.6 million, but even these figures are probably optimistic. If he is forced to liquidate his property, Hammer would be lucky to raise enough money to satisfy half his debts. He has to present a reorganization plan explaining how he intends to repay his creditors, but only the secured claimants—which include the I.R.S. and Capitol Records—stand much chance of being paid in full.

Despite, or perhaps because of, his financial problems, Hammer is trying to resurrect his career. Under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code, any money that he earns after filing for bankruptcy is protected from his creditors. Earlier this year, he signed a new contract with Death Row Records, the label that boasts Snoop Doggy Dogg and Tupac Shakur among its roster of rap artists. Judging by a recent magazine photograph, in which Hammer appeared sporting a black ski cap, dark glasses, and a goatee, the man who was once decried as a "candy rapper" is now trying to get with Death Row's gangsta vibe.

Not everybody in the music industry blames Hammer for his financial problems. "In this business, you have these overnight-success stories, but they tend to go down very quickly," one business associate owed money by Hammer said. "They think it will always be as good as it is now. They don't sock the money away and invest it. Instead, they tend to spend it, which certainly seems appropriate at the time but may not seem so later." ♦

"The Muckraker of Symphony Hall," Jamie James; "Paying Attention," Paul Griffiths; "Under the Hammer," John Cassidy.

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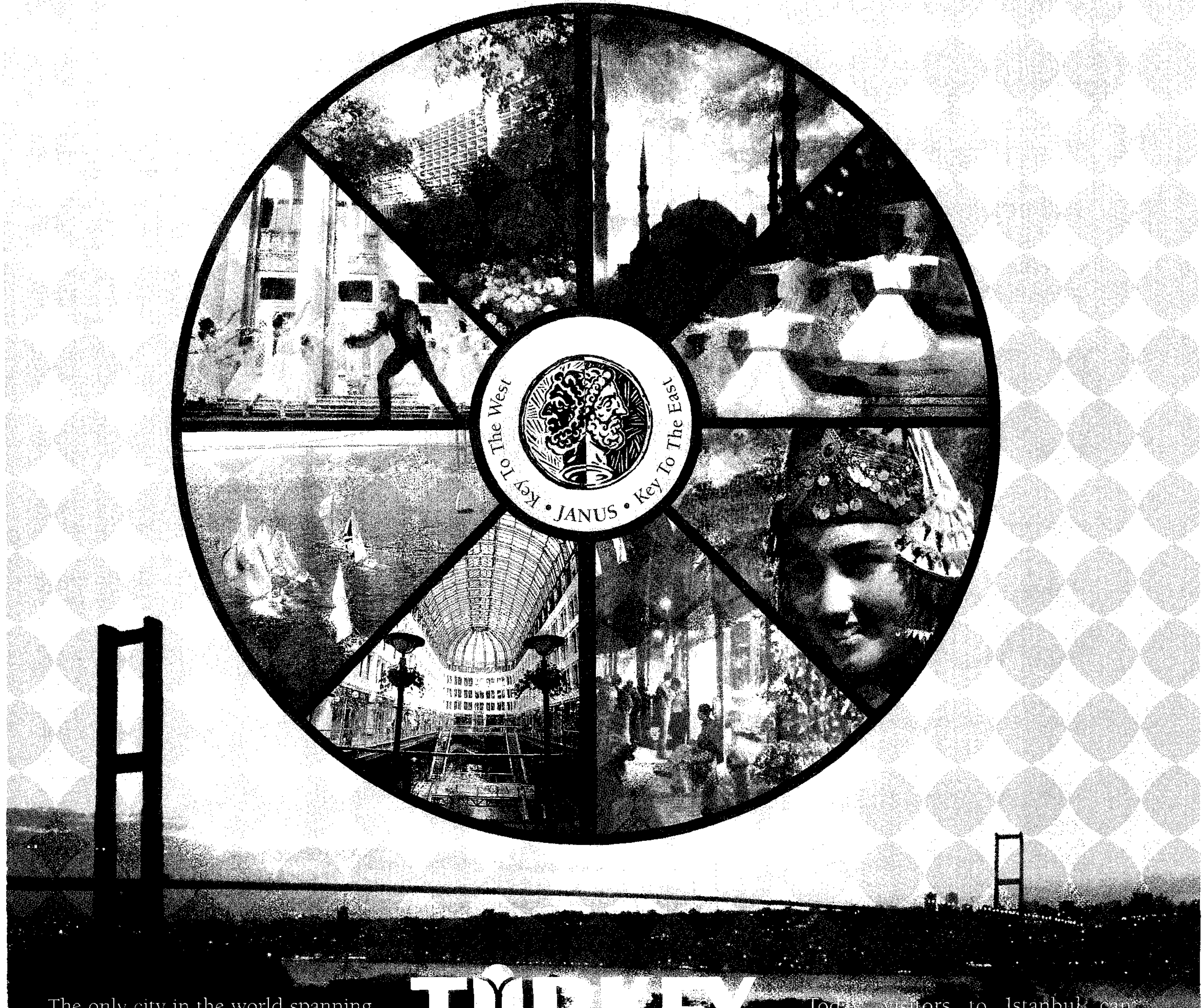

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HARCOURT BRACE

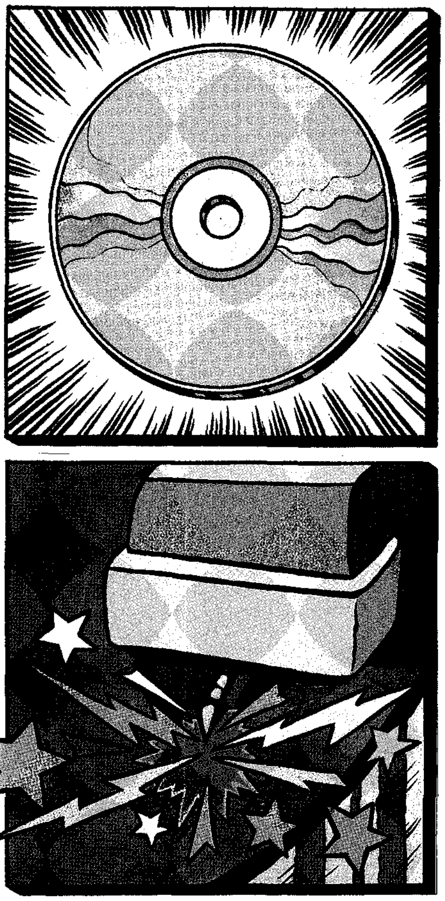
ANNALS OF SOUND

MY PROBLEM WITH PERFECTION

The consequences of the CD revolution.

BY DAVID DENBY

When I was thirteen or fourteen, I used to listen to Rangers games while lying in bed. Searching for the game one night on my table radio—a Philco, I think—I heard a voice in full cry which stopped me from twirling the dial. The voice had an almost brazen solidity; it seemed less a moving stream of sound than a palpable object, with weight, size, texture. It made an overwhelming demand; it imposed itself. The radio was rattling, but I wanted even more voice, so I turned it up, and the Philco, overloaded, cringed like an angry toaster in a children's book. The voice was Enrico Caruso's, and the aria—was it "Celeste Aida" or "Cielo è mar!"?—had been made forty or forty-five years earlier. At the time, I had no interest in opera, but I shuddered with excitement.

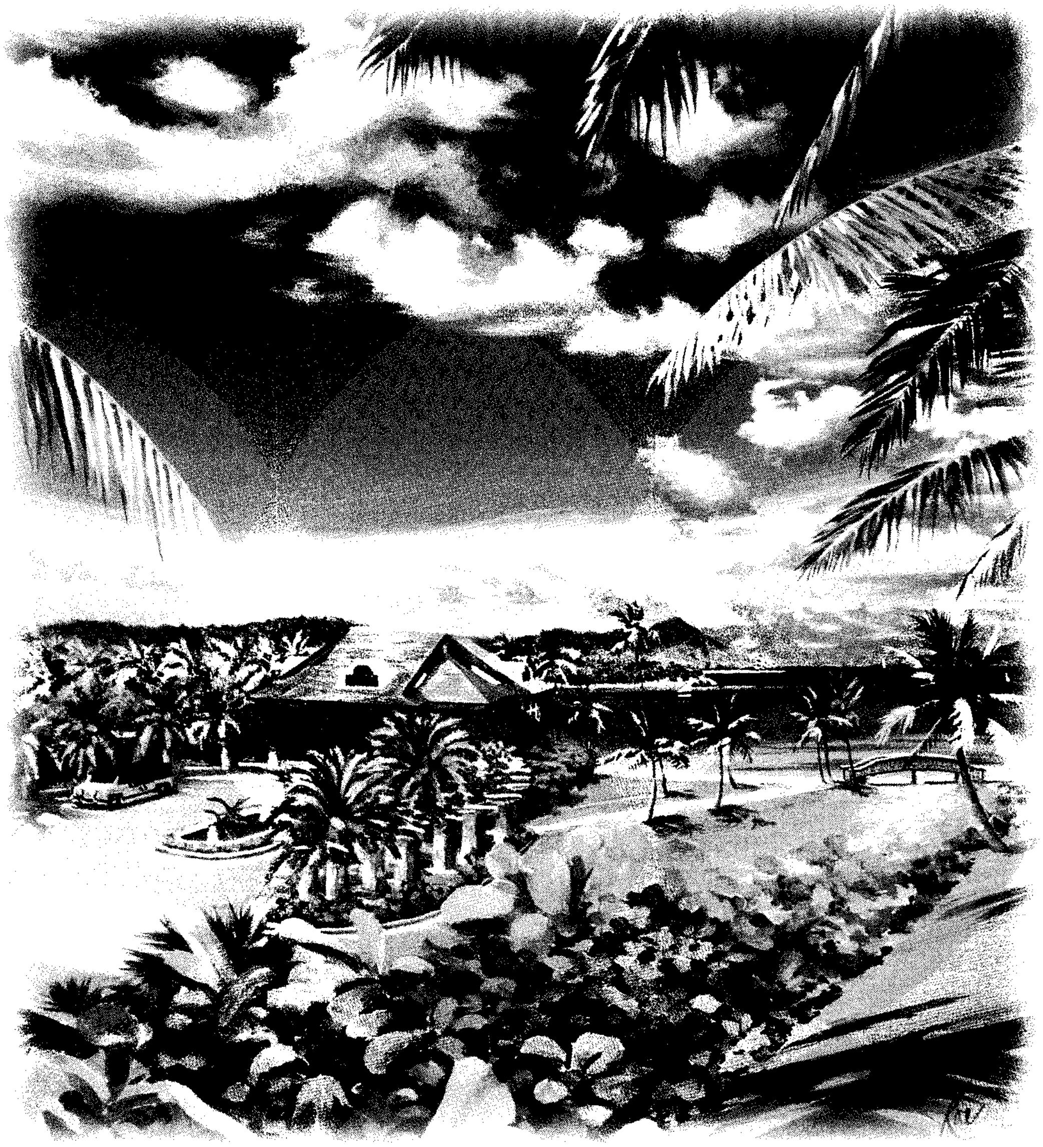


We're all looking for an emotionally satisfying illusion, a simulacrum of music.

MARK ZINGARELLI

The relation between recorded sound and musical pleasure is a great mystery. If someone sits before a fifty-thousand-dollar hi-fi system playing the latest CD and says "That's not real music!" no argument about the accuracy of "frequency response" will change that music lover's mind, any more than a woman can be argued into finding a man attractive. Something of Caruso's voice—the frank, liberating coarseness and suave intimacy, the heroic iron—came through the old recording, with its wash of noise, and then survived the AM broadcast and the vibrating radio. And so it happens again and again. You're lying nearly comatose on the beach, the sun beating down, the roaring ocean at your feet, and, with a Walkman pressed against your ear and Sinatra or Kurt Cobain singing, your heart jumps. Why? The sound isn't accurate; it's barely intelligible. Is a memory of once hearing the music live filling in the gaps in the sound? Perhaps. But when I was thirteen I had never heard Caruso in any form. Almost everyone has had a comparable revelation—nearly driving off the road with excitement upon hearing something amazing for the first time on a car radio. This actually happened in Los Angeles a few years ago, when a disk jockey began playing the Third Symphony of an unknown Polish composer named Henryk Górecki: many drivers, struck by the powerful, unfamiliar music, pulled over to the side of the freeway to listen. Subsequently, the symphony, in the Elektra Nonesuch recording by David Zinman and the London Sinfonietta, with the soprano Dawn Upshaw, crossed over to the pop charts and went on to sell nearly a million copies worldwide.

Beautiful recorded sound can be thrilling—the palpability of great music played at home on a great system is, to my mind, one of the largest imaginable pleasures. And old recordings, with their



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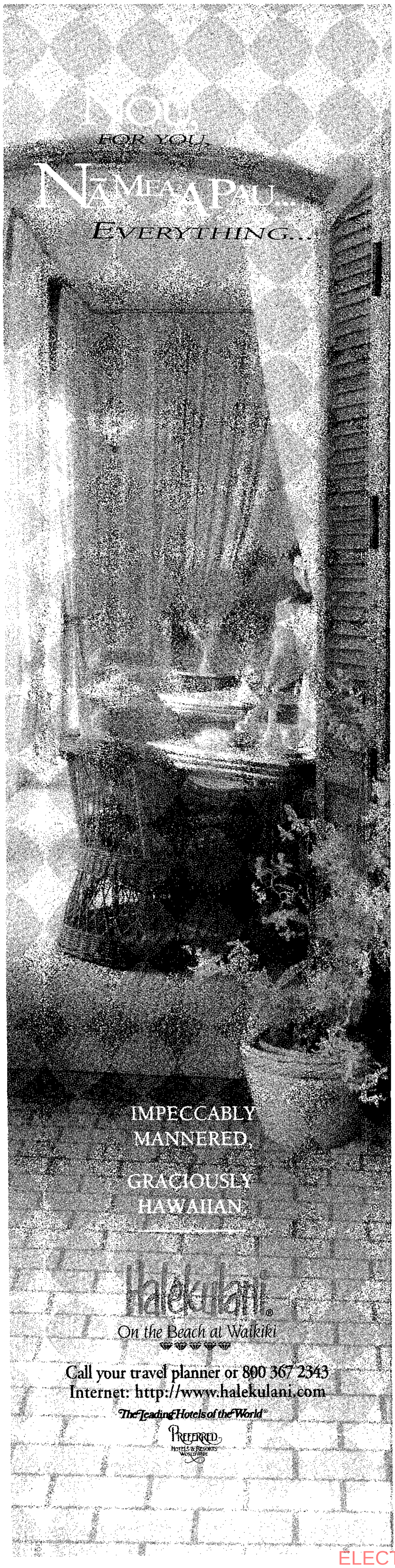

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slightly tubby, honking bleat, their flattened high-frequency tones and muddied middle, can also be very satisfying. The cracks, pops, and hiss in the background function as a kind of proscenium; the old recordings often have a rich theatricality, and the listener, struggling to complete the performance, helps the music along.

No recording technology, whether primitive or advanced, can do more than offer an illusion, for the sound of live music is ineffable. The technology hasn't been invented—and will never be invented—that can entirely capture Sonny Rollins at the mellow Village Vanguard or the Boston Symphony in resonant Symphony Hall. Everyone knows this at some level, but what's amusing is how often people are willing to forget it and how much emotion and money have been devoted to promoting one illusion over another. I myself have brought several flourishing dinner parties to a halt by violently arguing the analogue-versus-digital question with the other guests.

WE'RE all looking for an emotionally satisfying illusion, a simulacrum of music. At every stage in the development of recording technology, listeners have been seduced by the notion of "authentic" sound. The early acoustic recordings, in which musical vibrations were re-created without electrical amplification (the process was purely mechanical), impressed some people so much that they imagined they could detect the characteristics of the room in which the recording was made. During the First World War, the gramophones with their large horns were lined up along with live singers at concerts, and afterward some listeners claimed not to have been able to hear the difference between recording and singer. Listeners want to believe in the accuracy of illusion; they also become attached to the illusion they feel comfortable with, to the technology that first gave them pleasure.

I can remember, from my parents' collection, the weight of the 78s in my hand. Handling the albums they came in was like turning the leaves of a very heavy and special book, a book of wonders. Breakable and brief, the recordings nevertheless had powerful advocates: the sound was intimate; it seemed to speak from the soul. The convenience (as well as the sound) of the long-playing record, introduced in 1948, overwhelmed the 78, just as the convenience of the CD later overwhelmed the LP. Suddenly, in the LP era, it became possible to get a complete symphony on one record, or an opera on three or four records, and the nation's musical literacy was immeasurably expanded. People who had never heard Beethoven's difficult and lengthy Missa Solemnis became familiar with this wondrous work. As the critic Mortimer Frank has pointed out to me, the Mahler revival might not have got very far without the LP.

Talk of "high fidelity" really began in the fifties, but that particular ad-copy phrase—as characteristic of the decade's swollen prosperity as tail fins and speckled Formica kitchen counters—remains entirely opaque. Fidelity to what? To the sounds that the microphone records? Or to the experience of live music in a hall or club? Fidelity to the scraping of violin bows, the vibrating reeds of woodwinds heard up close? Or to the smooth, thick, darkly voluptuous blend of the Vienna Philharmonic heard from a first-tier box at Carnegie Hall?

What *is* musical sound? Whether sitting in Carnegie or in front of your speakers, you're engulfed in powerful alterations in air pressure. Sound travels in continuous waves. Musical sound doesn't stop until the whole piece ends; until then, the "silences" between notes are filled with music: the tones fading away, the breathing of the players, the gathered implications of the previous note or phrase, which will be fulfilled by the next. The great value of analogue sound—the technology of the long-playing record and all its predecessors—is that it recapitulates the way we hear. When an analogue recording is made, the live music leaves the saxophone or the soprano's throat and arrives at the diaphragm of the microphone, where the wave energy gets transformed into a continuous electrical signal that represents the variation in air pressure hitting the microphone. That energy is then stored in magnetic form on tape and is eventually recast into minute wave patterns—again, "analogues" of the original sound waves—cut into the grooves of the vinyl LP. The stylus—what your mother called "the needle"—then rides the grooves and initiates another chain of

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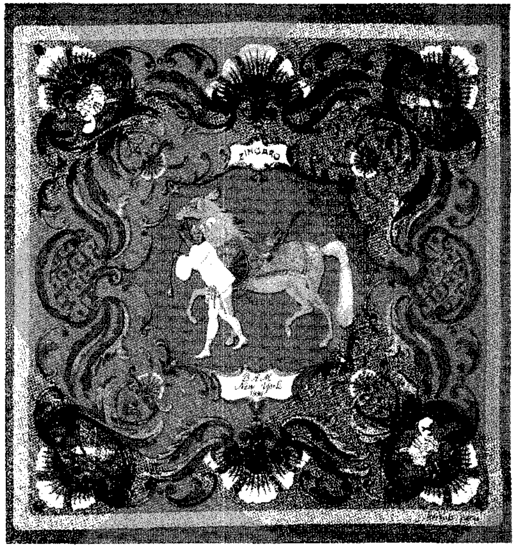
Who wouldn't understand why Hermès is interested in helping the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) to bring France's critically acclaimed equestrian theater troupe to New York for its American premiere? Aficionados know that the reason dates back to 1837 on the rue Bassedu-Rempart, in the busy Madeleine quarter of Paris where Thierry Hermès established his saddle and harness workshops and the now legendary firm's love affair with horses began.

Shortly after opening and having moved to 24, Faubourg Saint-Honore, the House was applauded for its devotion not only to quality through craftsmanship, but also, and importantly, to a concern for the comfort of the horse. Royal commissions followed as did those of European aristocrats who waited up to a year for an Hermès harness. Crafted in leather perfectly matched to the color of the horses which would draw the carriages, Hermès harnesses quickly became the standard of fashion for the luxurious carriage teams which frequented the Champs-Elysées and the Bois de Boulogne.



Above: Hermès commemorative silk twill pocket square.

With their horses elegantly appointed, Hermès customers soon demanded accessories and attire for themselves which rivaled the quality and distinctive design of their mounts or teams. Not wishing to disappoint a customer, Hermès introduced a collection of "saddle stitched" luggage which was followed by agendas, belts, gloves, couture, shoes, jewelry and wristwatches. And, at the turn of the century, when horseless carriages arrived, Hermès adapted its creativity and style to crafting travel kits and sports and automobile accessories.

Today, 159 years later, Hermès is still a saddler and remains devoted to quality, craftsmanship and, of course, the horse. Indeed, Hermès' homage to the noble beast is evidenced in each of its seventeen métiers. Hermès designers, under the direction of chairman and creative director Jean-Louis Dumas-Hermès, are challenged annually to channel their creative energies around a theme. Introduced to his designers three years out, each theme relates to Dumas-Hermès' long-term vision for the company. From "Fireworks" in 1987 when the firm celebrated its 150th anniversary to last year's theme, "The Year of the Road," Dumas-Hermès uses themes to project both the company's unrivaled heritage and its absolute relevance to the moment.

Mr. Dumas-Hermès assembled his team of designers three years ago to announce the theme for 1996. In a brief but thoughtful moment, Mr. Dumas-Hermès gave the following directive to his designers:

"In the beginning there is silence, whose value lies in its being broken. Thus, everything is expressed in sound, life first of all. The heart and the rhythm of its beats: the first music offered to mankind.

"Nineteen hundred ninety-six is to be music. In it I see both rigor and love. The craftsmanship of Hermès at the service of elegance. Quoting Pierre Boulez, 'Elegance is never frivolous. It is the supreme manifestation of difficulty overcome, of an ease that makes the difficulty itself forgotten. Elegance is therefore nothing more than an acute form of precision.' These words of the composer about his art make me hope that the work of the musician and that of Hermès can be joined: a product of rein and hand, the gesture of one becoming sounds and that of the other becoming objects.

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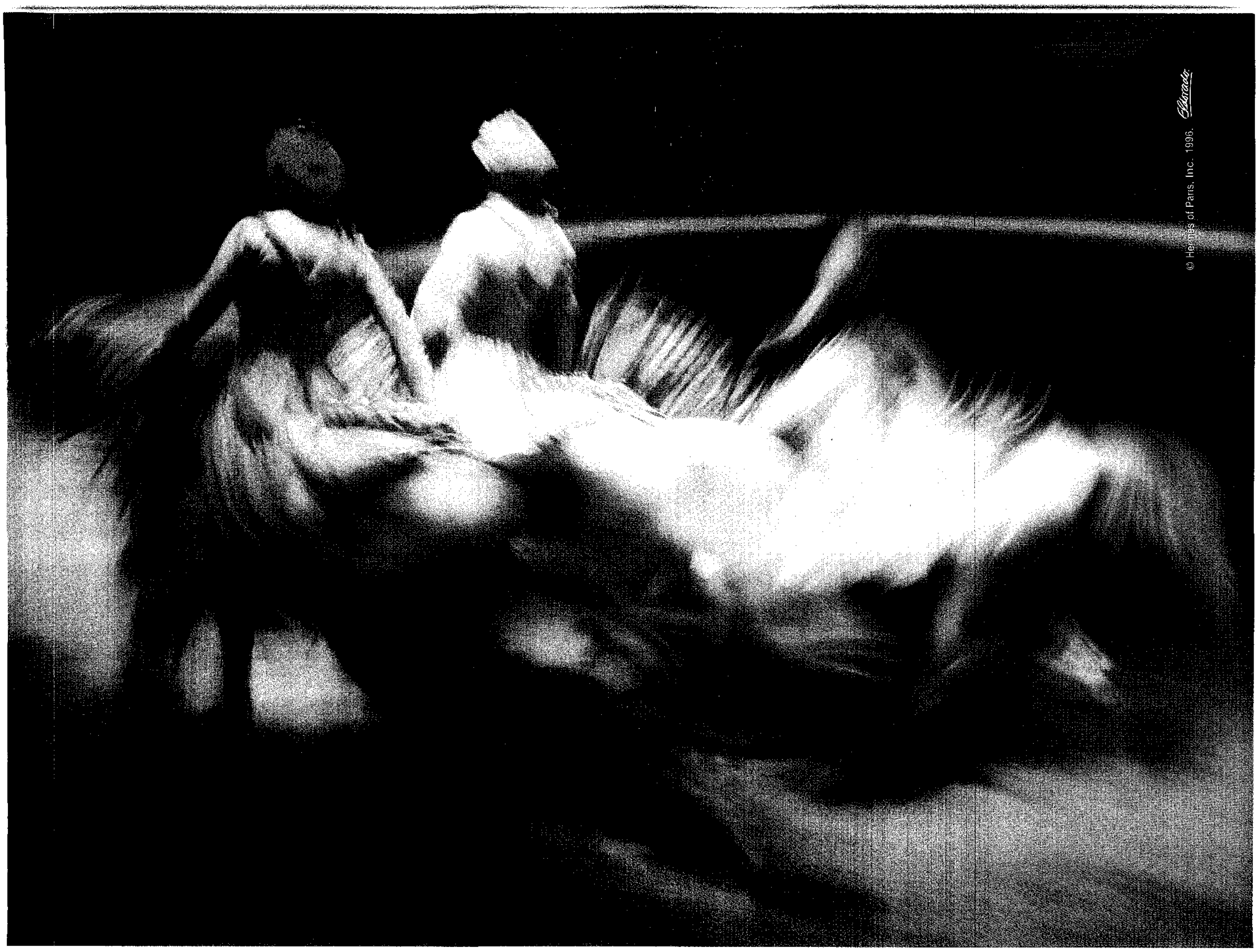
Therein lies the explanation for Hermès' unprecedented association with BAM in presenting Zingaro's equestrian theater piece, *Chimère*. Foremost, a salute to the innovative programming for which BAM is internationally renowned. The kind of programming which explores the creative genius in men like Bartabas. Driven by a singular passion for horses, he created an unparalleled ballet where the majestic horse and man appear as one. Together they are completely seduced by the haunting music of India. A passion so beautifully expressed, so artfully performed, that Hermès simply had to be involved.

Further, Hermès is proudly demonstrating its support of BAM by helping to look after the transportation and care of the horses. And, befitting the star performers, twenty-six horses and two understudies will arrive in New York draped in custom-made Hermès blankets, fashioned in the colors of Zingaro. For the millions of collectors of the firm's legendary silk designs, a silk pocket square which commemorates the American debut of Zingaro's *Chimère*. Proceeds from the sale of each pocket square will go to BAM.

Though oceans apart at the time of their founding, the principles which guide BAM and Hermès seemed destined to bring them together. It was simply a question of finding a horse, a melody and one man's quest to tell a story. One which won't soon be forgotten by those fortunate enough to see it.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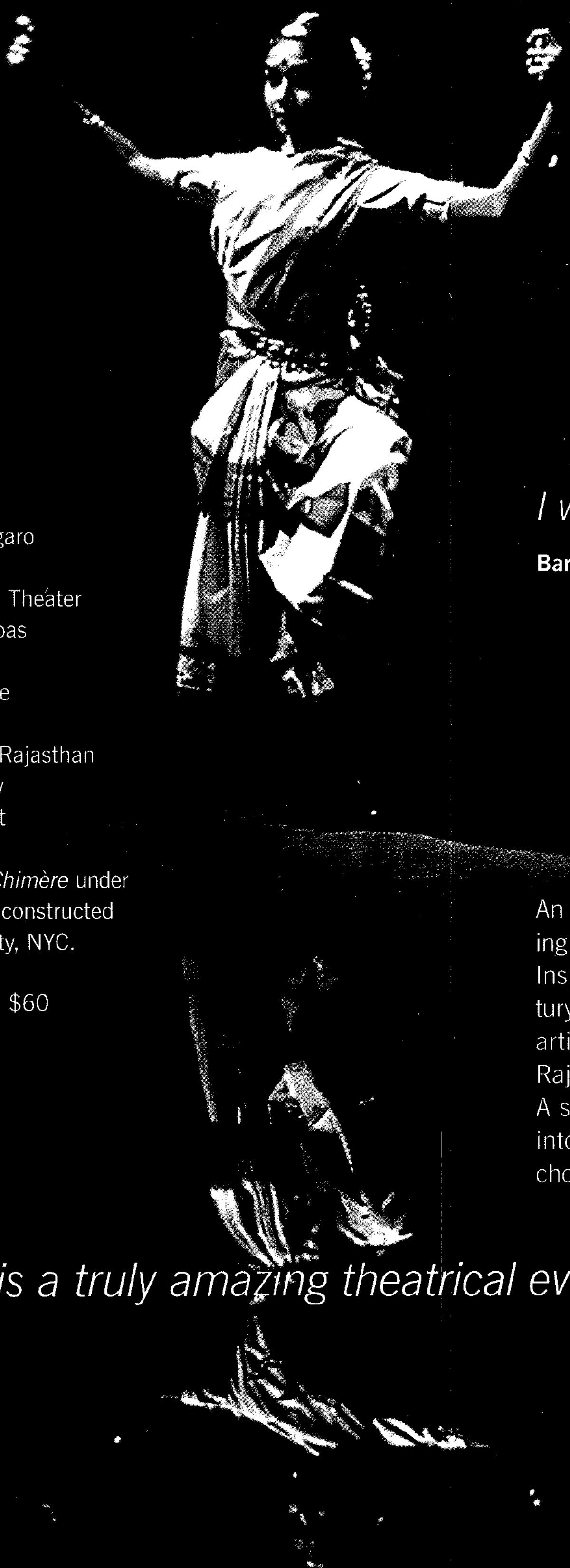

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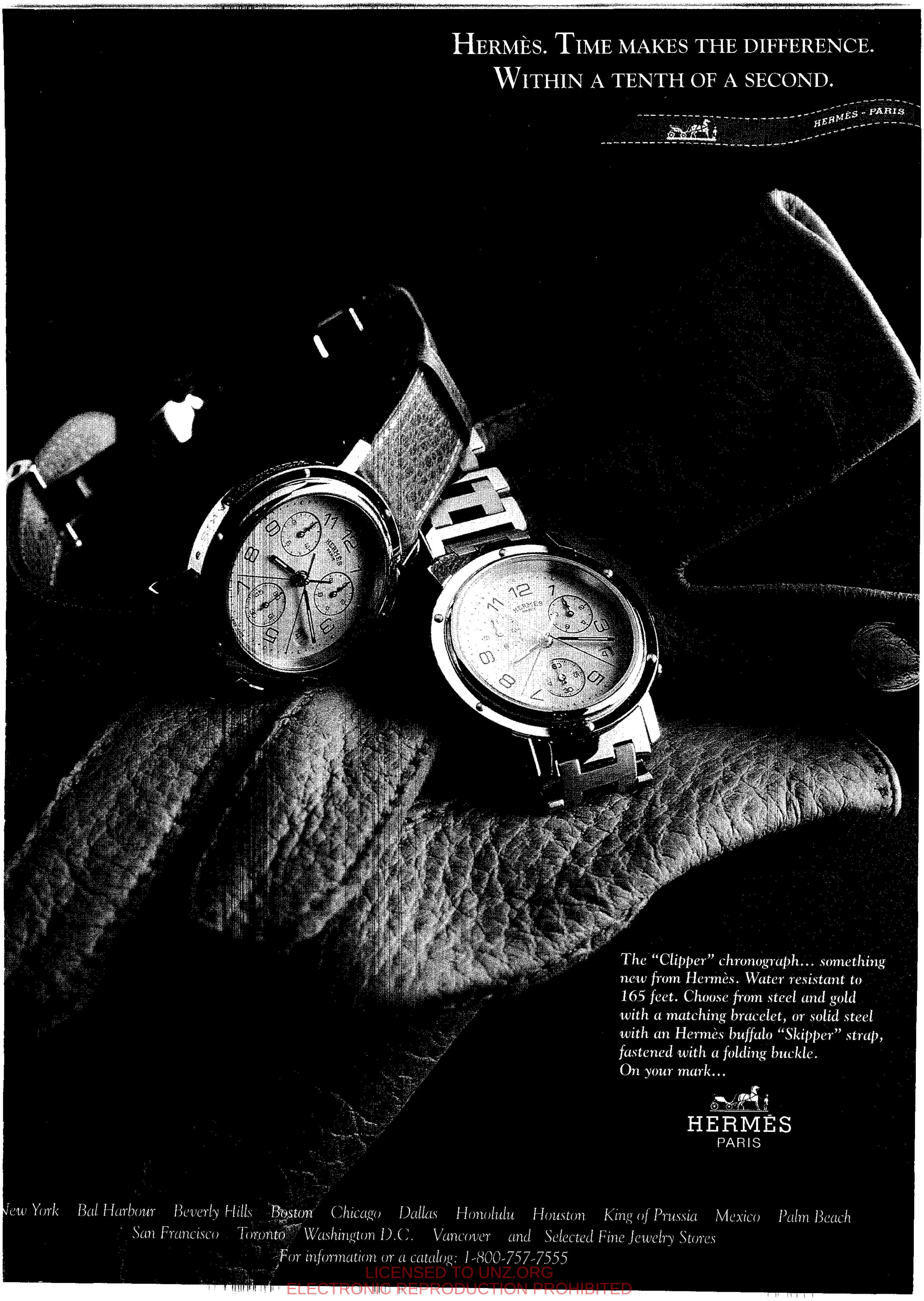

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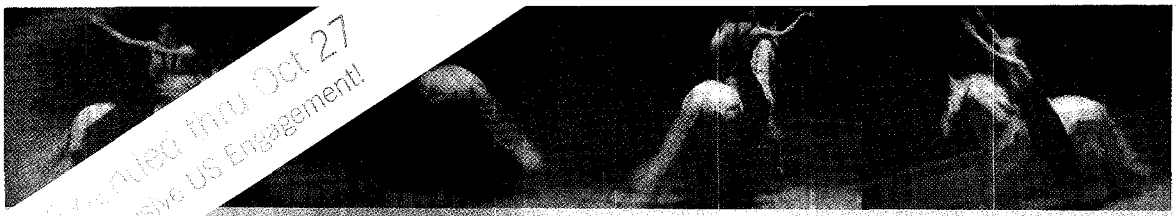

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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22 **Chimère** 8pm	23 **Chimère** 8pm	24 **Chimère** 8pm	25	26 **Chimère** 8pm	27 **Chimère** 8pm	28 **Chimère** 8pm
29	30 **Chimère** 8pm	O				
		1 **Chimère** 8pm	2 **Chimère** 8pm	3	4 **Chimère** 8pm	5 **Chimère** 8pm
6	7 **Chimère** 8pm	8 **Chimère** 8pm	9 **Chimère** 8pm	10	11 **Chimère** 8pm	12 **Chimère** 8pm
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Photo by Dan Rest

Ingmar Bergman's *Madame de Sade*

Photo by Dan Rest

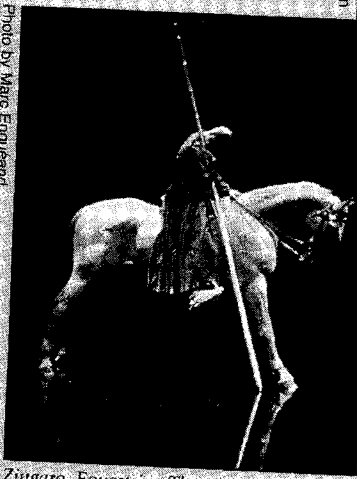
Orfeo ed Euridice, Baroque Opera

Though you might want to see Equestrian Theater one night and Baroque Opera the next,

BAM prefers to see the same thing every night.

Photo by Lenny Bernstein

Don Byron, *Jazz: the Next Wave*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Zingaro, Equestrian Theater

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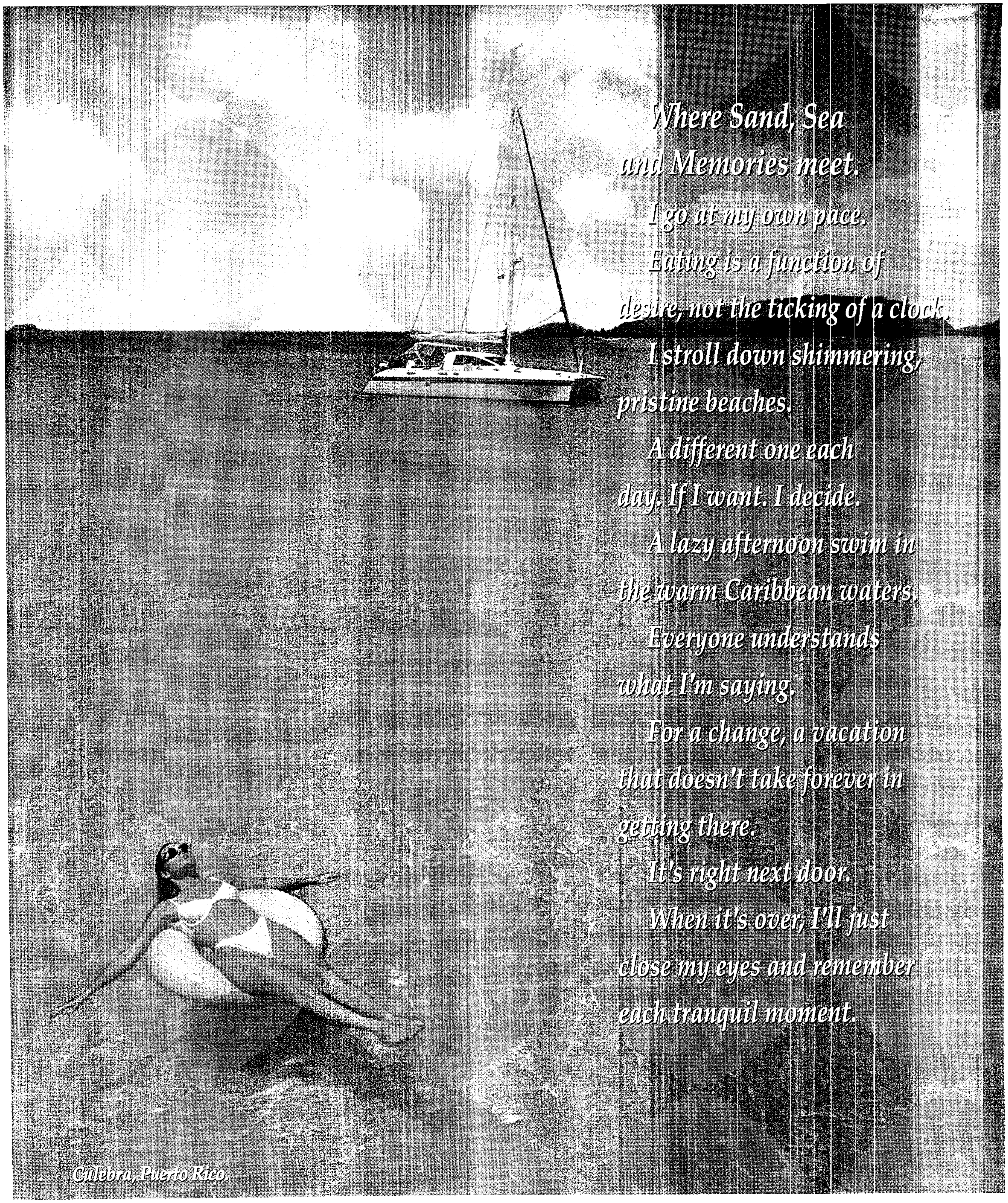

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electrical transformation, which culminates in the speakers' vibrating and triumphantly pushing fresh waves to the listener. Analogue's most powerful illusion is that of continuity.

In digital recording, on the other hand, electrical signals representing the sound waves emerging from the actual performance are very rapidly sampled by a digital recorder, and then the entire wave pattern is reconstructed from many little "snapshots" taken of it. The sampling rate is very high—over forty-four thousand times a second. But is it high enough? And is the bit rate—the speed at which digitized information moves—high enough? Is all of the actual performance really there, including the full silences? Does the process itself introduce distortions that elude measurement? Digital recording scores high on sound accuracy, but is it as *musical*—as true to the performance—as analogue?

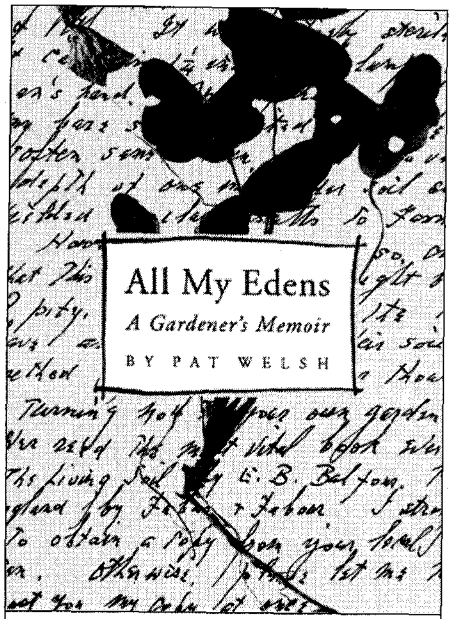
For many years, a passionate minority of listeners (including me) did not think so, although digital technology has greatly advanced in recent years. Meanwhile, the rest of the world has enjoyed the fruits and suffered the discomforts of an extraordinary revolution that, like it or not, has profoundly changed the recording process, the musical repertoire, the way we listen to music, and, possibly, music itself.

MADONNA AND CHILD, 2008
Mom, you're kind of, like, EMBARRASSING me.

You can hold it easily with the fingers of one hand spread in a gentle claw along the outer edge. It seems a congenial thing—so graspable, and not cumbersome, like the much larger LP, which has to be eased out of its envelope and then precariously wedged between palms. Yet when you look down at the side without the label, the side of the compact disk where the music is, you get a slightly unpleasant surprise: the image of your own face staring back from the mirrorlike surface. And then you get a second surprise: the twin funnels of rainbow colors—cool, bodiless colors—rushing eerily from the center hole to the edge. The CD is small and convenient, yet alien; compact but not companionable. If you put your nose right up to the disk and peer at the surface (plastic covered with lacquered aluminum), you see little but shiny silver, pale pink, and pale yellow. When the surface is photographed through a high-powered microscope, however, it displays little excavations aligned in a continuous spiral. The excavations, or pits, look like molds for tiny hot dogs and tiny cookies, corresponding to the two digits of the binary system, 0 and 1, which can carry many kinds of information, including, when they're properly decoded, music.

More than *six billion* CDs have been sold since late 1982, when the new medium was first put on the market by its co-inventors, Philips and Sony, accompanied by the brazen slogan "Perfect sound, forever." By now, the CD is among the most familiar of household objects, yet the disk has never lost its chill of strangeness—the immaculate, sci-fi, industrial-design chic. For many people, that chic is a significant part of its appeal.

Its birth was attended by practical angels. CDs were required to satisfy one paramount need: to be capacious enough to hold, say, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (about seventy minutes long). Like the floppy disk or the audiocassette, the CD was small, light, and could go anywhere. It quickly became the darling of a fitful society in which people consumed much of their music in planes or automobiles or while cleaning the house or preparing dinner. It was a great medium if you just wanted music *on*, in the background, and weren't eager to sit down and devote yourself to actual listening. No one could question the CD's excellence, in conjunction with the compact-disk player, as an appliance. The audiocassette, by contrast, was a fragile, snafu-prone object, which broke easily; and the LP presented endless difficulties. When one played a record, there was always that moment of tension as the cartridge, with its jewel-tipped stylus, descended and risked gouging the tender vinyl flesh—or, even worse, hurting itself. The sound of the stylus scraping abjectly against the lip of the LP, unable to climb over the edge and settle into its groove, could have made Napoleon weep. In a compact-disk player, by contrast, the hidden laser beam, like God's finger tracing a line on a child's forehead, read the little hot-dog molds, and even music lovers who were not enamored of the sound were delighted by the safety and ease of playing the disks. From the beginning, the CD was encased in hype: it promised aural "perfection." The mainstream audio press fell right into line, and proclaimed the new medium a great advance in fidelity. But



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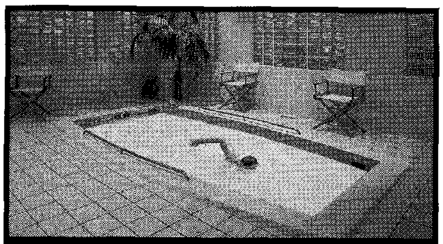

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the success was sealed by something more mundane: the American romance with ease and availability.

REVOLUTIONS inspired by practicality can be alarming. They may succeed beyond all measure—beyond anyone's desire or need. Consider the situation in classical music, where the effect of the CD can be seen most clearly. An unsuspecting person who now wanders into a music superstore may be baffled or appalled: how can he sort his way through the acreage of disks? Our poor buyer is like a cow entering the Garden of Eden. Virtually the entire recorded history of Western music lies before him. Suppose he is looking for nothing more exotic than a performance of Beethoven's Fifth to give to his nephew. Well, at my neighborhood HMV, on Manhattan's Upper West Side, I recently counted thirty-eight separate Fifths in the regular bin and quite a few more in the "historical" section. (The Schwann catalogue, which keeps track of everything in print, lists seven different performances of Beethoven's Fifth led by the great German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler: they stretch from 1926 to 1954, and five of them are with the Berlin Philharmonic alone.) Nearby are eighteen boxed sets of the complete Beethoven symphonies, including four played on original instruments and one transcribed for piano by Liszt. There are more than sixty versions of the Fifth available at a single store—performances lean or lush, fast or slow, Beethoven the way he might have been done in, say, 1810 (conducted by John Eliot Gardiner) and in 1890 (by Furtwängler), and the way he *was* done in 1939 (by Toscanini) and in 1975 (by Carlos Kleiber), and so on. Our baffled shopper finds before him not only the recorded history of Western music but, increasingly, the history of Western interpretation as well. Almost as many versions, in almost as many performing styles, exist of the most popular symphonies of Mozart, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler. My neighborhood branch of Tower Records currently carries twenty-four complete versions of "Don Giovanni," recorded over a period of sixty years. And Schwann lists eleven complete "Ring" cycles. It is more music than anyone can consume or enjoy, a kudzulike growth that has sinister as well as benevolent implications.

In the eighties, fired up with the exuberance of a new market, such major labels as Deutsche Grammophon, Philips, Columbia (now Sony Classical), London, BMG/RCA, and E.M.I. recorded the standard classical repertoire again and again. At around the same time, myriad new labels sprang up or became more prominent, bearing names with vaguely Hellenic or astrophysical associations: Delos, Naxos, Dorian, Hyperion, Chandos, Telarc, Nimbus. Some of them explored unfamiliar musical territory while others recorded standard stuff with performers not considered to be world class. On CDs, a conductor named Antoni Wit, working with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, has become an inescapable presence. Naxos offers his Tchaikovsky and Strauss on the cheap, trumping the big companies, which charge higher prices. The little companies have narrowed the formerly immense gap in status between major and minor ensembles. Working without union costs or high-priced musicians and technicians, a tiny company recording a soloist or a small ensemble, or merely reissuing an old performance, can expect to break even—or, at least, stay in the game—by selling just a thousand or so copies of the release.

Beethoven has been recorded over and over, but the expansive new market has also placed him and the rest of the standard repertoire in a widening circle of composition and interpretation—returning Beethoven and the other great composers to their own times and the company of contemporaries from which history and taste had abstracted them. The wheat has rejoined the chaff. A label called Marco Polo (a subsidiary of Naxos) has recorded the complete string quartets—in nine volumes—of Louis Spohr. Who, you ask, is Louis Spohr? And is life long enough to devote any time to his wind quintets? Not *my* life. But the expanded marketplace tends to rebuke such impertinent remarks, making near pop icons out of such former unthinkables as an early-music singing group called Anonymous 4 and a twelfth-century composing abbess, Hildegard of Bingen. A great many scores, largely unperformed in concert halls, have kicked off their headstones—pre-Renaissance music, twentieth-century esoterica, and the innumerable works of British composers that have been recorded by the tireless, blithely chauvinistic record companies of England. In the CD bins, Sir Arnold Bax now sups with Brahms.

And so a great decentering of the music world has taken place—an immense expansion of the marketplace for recorded classical music, comparable, perhaps, to the opening of the literary canons in American universities (though the expansion has been largely unaccompanied by ideological attack on the established classics). "Fidelity" in the CD era has meant something new: we have become faithful to the whole range of musical composition, and not just to the acknowledged masterpieces. The programs of the New York Philharmonic may have changed very little in thirty years, but CD buyers increasingly go their own way. The little record companies reach pockets of listeners—specialists and enthusiasts—all over the world, finding them through alternative radio stations, the Internet, word of mouth, and mail order.

One thing these companies do best is rescue old performances from the shelves of American and European recording and radio archives. Not only such conducting greats as Wilhelm Furtwängler, Arturo Toscanini, and Bruno Walter have been revived but also a fascinating conductor like Dimitri Mitropoulos (Leonard Bernstein's predecessor at the New York Philharmonic); among singers, not only Maria Callas, Kirsten Flagstad, and Jussi Björling but a host of superlative lesser-knowns, like Paul Franz and Toti dal Monte. At times, market exuberance passes over into pointlessness or scam. Some of the old performances are merely redundant, or poorly recorded, and many reissues come accompanied by suspiciously bare program notes, or no notes at all. Was the performance dubbed, pirated, taped surreptitiously in the first place? The glut of overhandled, not quite legitimate goods gives the superstore the jumbled atmosphere of a flea market.

The result, however, is that connoisseurship has been democratized. Astonishing discoveries are as available to the average consumer as to the specialist. The collector no longer needs to rummage through attics or garage sales. His favorites have been reissued in sets of four, five, or even ten CDs. Digital remastering has cleaned up the old recordings, so that extraneous noise has been lessened, often without diminution in the quality of the musical information. The digital remastering of Caruso on BMG's various releases slightly lessens the brazen impact of the voice, but—regretfully saying goodbye to childhood memory—I find them, on balance, preferable to the older recordings: One hears more of Caruso's intonations and inflections of phrase, particularly in mezza-voce singing, than one heard before. Caruso the radio-busting colossus disappears, and the singer of unparalleled beauty emerges.

Historical reissues offer a different kind of fidelity as well: faithfulness to time and place. Something of the cultural attitudes—the passions and vanities and earnestness of the past—comes through in the old performing styles. Caruso's 1908 recording of "La donna è mobile," a performance by turns jaunty and caressingly seductive, suggests the assurance of a nineteenth-century man revelling in his sexual power over women. Unembarrassed by charges of sexism, the performance is startlingly candid. By contemporary standards, Caruso's throbbing delivery of "Rachel, quand du Seigneur," from Halévy's "La Juive," is overripe, even corny, but such emotional conviction suggests the grace of a vanished culture in which not every gesture was shamed by irony. In Furtwängler's tearing, anguished performance of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony—recorded in Berlin with the Philharmonic in October, 1944, when the Red Army was not far away—one can hear the tormented grandeur of a proud civilization facing defeat and grasping at redemption. Furtwängler holds the final sustained horn notes until the players must be ready to burst; he doesn't want the music to end. The lavish virtuosity and luxurious panache of the fifties and sixties soloists and conductors—of Heifetz, Horowitz, Rubinstein, Cliburn, Reiner, Ormandy, and the young, spiritually undeveloped Leonard Bernstein—give way by the seventies and eighties to the more austere virtuoso styles of Maurizio Pollini and Gidon Kremer and the slew of astringent original-instruments maestros. Listening to the vast range of disks at our disposal, we can indulge our own moods through time, from sensuous to chaste and back again, plotting our alterations in taste and spiri-

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tual aspiration. We can be faithful to ourselves.

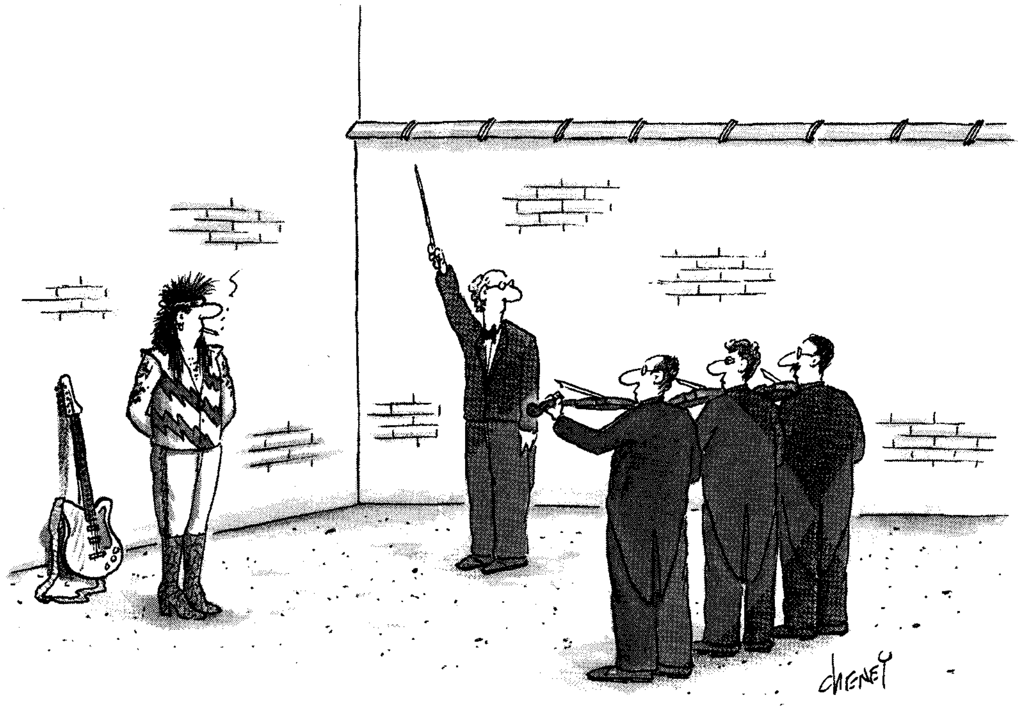
And faithful to the entire careers of great musicians. Among the hundred and forty-odd albums devoted to Louis Armstrong are a number of CDs, issued by Classics and King Jazz, that follow Armstrong's work from year to year, beginning in the late twenties and continuing into the thirties and forties. We can now accompany the great man through his ups and downs, and through the changes in personnel of different bands, just the way a fan now follows the career of, say, Wynton Marsalis. At the same time, young musicians of Marsalis's generation can now hear the classic work of their predecessors, the albums that a negligent public earlier allowed to fall out of print. Growing up in the seventies, those musicians may have known Miles Davis only from his late, inferior fusion, or jazz-rock, period. Now they can hear the great Davis albums from the fifties, like "Kind of Blue." The effect may be comparable to what happens to young playwrights who knew Tennessee Williams only through a late work like "The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore" and suddenly come upon "A Streetcar Named Desire."

The picture is not entirely rosy. When plenitude becomes glut, satiety and indifference set in. If anything, the cornucopian tendencies of the CD have intensified the endless crisis of classical music—the forlorn sense that its most vital days are over. Music lovers who have seven hundred years of music history behind them may have been driven to feel that today's music, both its composers and its performers, lacks the character and fire of the earlier classics. And beginners in classical music may feel so overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of music to listen to that they give up before even trying. A cow faced with Eden may simply turn around and nibble elsewhere. At the same time, the CD has stimulated an aesthetic of perfectionism, encouraging too many musicians to strive, as the critic Edward Rothstein has put it, "for note-perfect performance at the expense of personality and spontaneity."

ALL recordings, whether analogue or digital, present a synthetic experience; they lack the complex presence, the danger and physical excitement, of music experienced live. We are not in the room with people busting a gut. The CD has increased the distance between live and recorded performance. For decades, record producers were able to splice together the best takes of a given performance, re-creating it from different recording sessions. With digital techniques, however, splicing is no longer necessary: tiny passages can be inserted; a tempo can be speeded up (at least for a bit) without discernible changes in pitch. Fundamentally, of course, digital isn't recorded *sound;* it's storage of numbers, and as such it's infinitely manipulatable. Surely you don't have to be an alarmist about cultural decline to sense something worrisome in all this—a drift toward cynicism.

The push-button convenience of CDs can produce contempt as well as pleasure. Classical-music stations like New York's now vanished WNCN went into aesthetic—not commercial—decline when the CD was invented. Suddenly, it was easy to program mere sections of pieces, interspersed with plenty of commercials. At home, if you reprogram the order of cuts in a pop album, you dissolve the album, at least as the album was once conceived—as a story that the artist wanted to tell. Played as a selection of favorites, "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" disintegrates into a random collection of eccentrically charming songs—not the end of the world, of course, but not what John Lennon and Paul McCartney intended, either. When the artist's narrative is ignored, the artist can be brushed aside as a mere provider of software.

We have lost the album in other ways as well. The cover art on the record's jacket, at one time a glorious splash of color, or a reproduction of a famous painting, or an explosion of wild, orangutan design, has been reduced to a tiny, often smudged photograph of the performer. The liner notes, formerly a minor but flourishing literary form, are now all too often dry, halfhearted attempts at musical analysis or quickie bios of the performers, or a few silly jokes, and are printed so sloppily and minutely that they are virtually illegible. The original packaging of the CD—a tall, ugly, clear plastic enclosure that allowed the actual album to stand up high in the bins—worked for the record stores but was an excruciating trial for the buyer. How did we ever get them open? Attacking them with one's bare hands was like making love to a shark. Hacking at them with knives or slamming them on kitchen counters, however enjoyable, didn't help much. The recording companies' presentation of the new invention was arrogant and teasing: they gave us a Porsche whose doors wouldn't open. Eventually, the plastic armor was abandoned and replaced by cardboard. After a yowl from environmentalists over the excessive packaging, the recording companies changed their minds again: the albums now come sheathed only in shrink-wrap. Even so, they



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are still difficult to undress. Like the gentlemen of the Victorian age who carried scissors inside their coats to snip the stays of ladies who had fainted, men of my acquaintance now carry pocketknives solely for the purpose of opening CDs.

Advocates of digital have often said this about people who continue to prefer the long-playing record to the CD: "What you call 'fidelity' is just a preference for the sound you are familiar with." To which the analogue lovers (including me) respond: "What you call 'measurable accuracy' has little to do with music. Enough nonsense. Go collar some six-foot-six-inch, two-hundred-and-twenty-pound man on the street and see if he can guard Michael Jordan. Measurements prove little; musicality will always be subjective."

Once CDs were introduced, millions of people dumped their LPs, some of them scratched and truly unplayable, some merely dusty. Within a few years, the CD appeared to have vanquished the LP. (As a medium for the automobile, the boom box, and the Walkman, the audiocassette held on, but the cassette makes no particular claim to musical fidelity. It lacks excitement and presence.) Yet the LP refused to die. In its seeming eclipse, its contemptible state as a disused American object comparable to a pre-Nike pair of sneakers, it hung in there and became an indomitable critic of the new medium—a prop plane arrogantly attempting to instruct a jet how to fly.

The battle between the analogue holdouts and the digital triumphalists is a complicated story, thick with ambiguities and disclaimers. When a CD player was plugged into a system with mushy old speakers and a grainy-sounding cheap receiver, the resulting sound from the disks *was* an improvement over records played on the same system. There were no pops or cracks; no hiss, wow, flutter, or rumble; pitch was firmed up, the bass line was solid, the music emerged from silence. An ordinary—i.e., mass-produced, Japanese—CD player sounded better than an ordinary turntable-cartridge combination, and it still does. But people who bought the right (usually expensive) equipment for playing LPs, and particularly audiophiles devoted to the "high end," were astounded by how much better their records sounded than the CDs. It seemed that as equipment got more and more sensitive, the inadequacies of the early CDs became overwhelmingly obvious. Many of them were a disgrace—steely, cold, unresonant, lacking warmth and naturalness. Violin sections sounded glossy and congealed; the trumpets got under one's scalp like needles; woodwinds became metalwinds. The entire presentation of the music was tense, hard, even shrill. Turning off a CD, analogue lovers felt the mounting anxiety—a pressure in their chests—drain away. CDs did not *breathe.*

Whatever the mainstream press may have said about it, the new CD technology was clearly immature, cast onto the market before it was ready. Some of the little classical companies, such as Telarc, Delos, and Chandos, did good work, but the CDs produced by the larger firms—notoriously Deutsche Grammophon in its albums with Karajan and the great Berlin Philharmonic—were often hard-edged, congested, and monochromatic. The music couldn't seem to get out of its own way. And some of the small, reassuring ambient clues were gone. One missed what the best analogue recording gave: the sense of air around the instruments; the reflected personality of plaster,

LYRIC BY WILLIAM FINN

THE MUSIC STILL PLAYS ON

William Finn, the composer and lyricist of "Falsettos," for which he won two Tony Awards in 1992, has written a new musical, "A New Brain," which will be produced by Lincoln Center Theatre next year. Below is a preview of one of the songs.

I had a son.
He was one
Of a kind.
Son of a gun,
We were too intertwined.

I look damn good in a hat.
My black dress hides the fat.
I don't want sympathy.
He was here and now he's gone.
The music still plays on.

I see the keys,
And I freeze:
No surprise.
This is how
He thinks I'll act
When he dies.
I'll be gracious but aloof.
Or I'll climb on the roof
Shouting obscenities.

He was here and now he's gone.
The music still plays on.

The music still plays on and on and on and on.
I hear it in my ear.
The music still plays on and on and on and on.
Even though you're not here,
My dear.

Married too young.

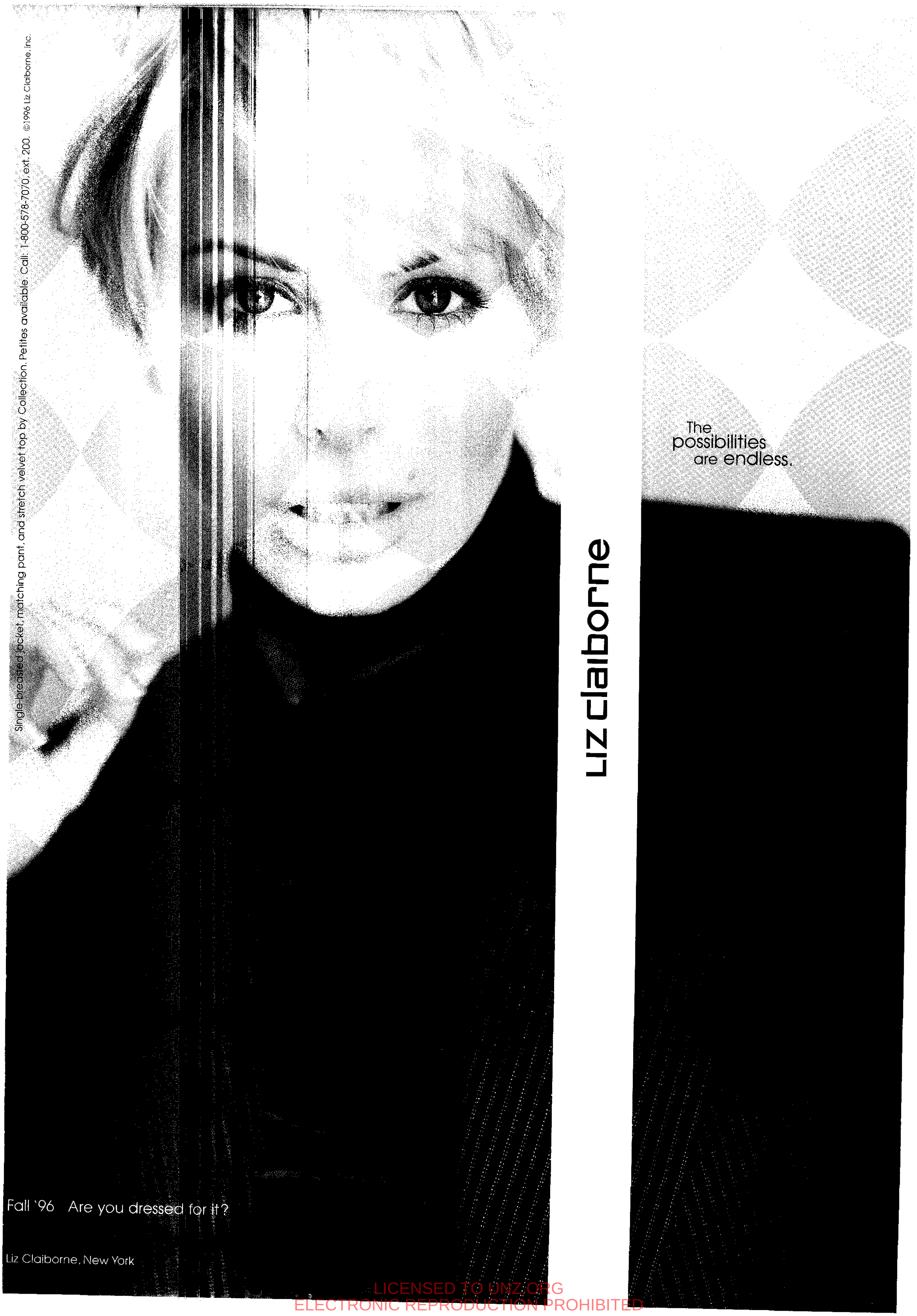
I was brash, I was bold.
Married too young
And divorced far too old.

Husband's sleeker than a horse.
He rears and flies off course.
I liked his pedigree.
Love is here and then it's gone.
The music still plays on.

The music still plays on and on and on and on.
As the men depart.
The music still plays on and on and on and on.
Transmitted through
My foo-
Lish heart.

So stay away.
I'm okay.
I'm ahead.
What came to pass—
One's an ass,
One is dead.
Love is stupid and it bleeds.
It satisfies my needs.
I think it's wonderful.
Once it was wonderful.
Love is here and then it's gone.
The music still plays on.

They were here and now they're gone.
The music still plays on and on
And on.



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wood, and marble; the sound of music vibrating in an actual room. Digital was faithful in some ways but not in others; the music was disembodied, creepily detached.

Many recording engineers and producers prefer digital sound. It's easy to edit, it's accurate (from their point of view), and once the music gets encoded into binary digits, it cannot deteriorate; the numbers are fixed for all time. But among musicians the response to digital has been mixed. "It's the Dark Ages of music," Neil Young moaned. Encountering James Taylor five years ago, I asked him whether he preferred the analogue or digital versions of his old albums. "Analogue, of course," Taylor said, without missing a beat. "With digital, there's no floor under the music." And the best-selling CD conductor John Eliot Gardiner, who was recently in New York for some period-instruments concerts, said, "Digital sound is brilliant, it's wonderful, but it has a sort of heartlessness about it which I sometimes find difficult to live with."

Do such quibbles dissolve in the "high end"? High-end audio can best be understood as a very strenuous and peculiar religion—a religion that joins austerity and sensuousness, and empties one's wallet at alarming speed. It involves not just the quest for fidelity but active faith. The main article of belief is that everything makes music. Everything. Not just the CDs, records, electronics, and speakers but the cables, the power supply, the people in the room, the walls and floors and couches and sconces. Your cat makes music. Every piece of wood, fabric, glass, stone, or flesh in your living room conducts information or vibrates, sending out waves. Therefore, everything can be improved, purified, or eliminated (including wives: audiophilia holds little appeal for women, who generally find the fetishism of equipment ludicrous).

Giving themselves over to their mania, audiophiles turn their listening rooms into temples of fidelity. They compose the rooms, piece by piece. At the homes of the two most brilliant audiophiles I know—Harry Pearson, the editor and publisher of *The Absolute Sound*, and Michael Gindi, a psychologist who writes for *Fi*, a new audiophile journal—I have sat in fascinated silence as my hosts moved gigantic speakers a few inches forward or backward, rolled panels of wave-diffracting wood ("room treatment") into place, and substituted one cable for another. Serious fidelity takes infinite pains.

The equipment can be as cranky and unstable as an overbred horse, but when everything goes well the results are stunning. In Dr. Gindi's apartment, magnificent tube amplifiers sit glowing on the floor; the platter rides on a cushion of air, produced by a compressor, which has to be stored in the bathroom (it makes noise); and the music, in its astonishing detail, effortlessly hangs there in the air, seemingly well *behind* the speakers. That is, the equipment re-creates the recording space captured by the microphones—re-creates it in all its dimensions, not just left and right but front and back, and even, at times, up and down. The bassoon is *here*, the oboe is *there*, and the sax—the player's lips audibly embracing the mouthpiece—has an almost shocking intimacy. This spatial detail is not what one hears at a jazz club or in a Carnegie Hall box. It's a specific audio experience—music reconstructed as landscape. Audiophiles, in their quest for fidelity, both honor and abandon music: they complete the retreat from live music in favor of a more interesting illusion of it at home. One leading New York intellectual I know will no longer leave his system to go to a concert; his wife goes to concerts, occasionally accompanied by the manufacturer of the couple's loudspeakers.

The retail cost of a system like Michael Gindi's is well over a hundred thousand dollars. Listening to it, I have travelled as far as possible from my adolescent bedroom and the plastic Philco. Its fidelity is certainly very "high," yet systems of this quality come with a built-in trap: LP recordings or CDs played on them have to be very good indeed to withstand such fanatical attention. Any flaws in the original recording will be magnified far more on Gindi's system than on my own, which is much cheaper and far more forgiving: it allows old recordings to sound good and minimizes the faults of lousy CDs. After some years of intoxication, I have withdrawn, with a sigh of relief, from audiophilia. I am trying to stay faithful to the spirit of the music even at the risk of betraying the truth of the recording. Fidelity is as fidelity does.

All through the eighties and the early nineties, the audiophile journals (*Stereophile* is another) kept up a remorselessly witty critique of digital sound. And musicians, if you press them a little, may agree, even today. When I spoke with John Eliot Gardiner, he deplored digital's inability to capture the proper decay—the gradual fading away—of a musical tone. "There's no . . . *Spätlese*," Gardiner said, sounding like Peter Ustinov. One reason, perhaps, that early digital seemed to some listeners so "pure" was that it dropped out the last few instants of decay. You didn't "hear" the silence: the music went dead between tones. Harry Pearson, writing in *The Absolute Sound*, repeatedly insisted that digital lacked harmonic richness as well, that it picked up the fundamentals but not the overtones, robbing a note of its fruitful ambiguity.

In recent years, designers of high-end compact-disk players have greatly improved the technology; they have begun to solve such irritating problems as "jitter" (tiny discrepancies in re-creating the wave samples, which produce distortions in the sound). Even audiophiles like Pearson and Gindi have grudgingly begun to admit that the best digital provides a rich musical experience, close in quality to analogue. As if to make amends for its flaws, Deutsche Grammophon has reissued some of the later Herbert von Karajan performances in "Karajan Gold" editions, which restore a degree of bloom and spaciousness to the sound of the Berlin Philharmonic. As for the thousands of unimproved disks from the early years of digital, many people have simply adjusted to them. Digital is now the sound of music for them, especially if they have never been to concerts or clubs and heard unamplified music in the flesh.

Next year, we will see the introduction of still another new medium—the DVD, or digital versatile disk. It is no larger than the CD, but it will hold seven times as much audio information. At first, the DVD will be devoted to video, but it has many possible applications, and an audio version is likely to follow in a few years, featuring much more information and perhaps also "higher" fidelity than the best current CDs. If that happens, the major record companies will undoubtedly record Beethoven and Brahms all over again. At the moment, however, such companies find themselves in an embarrassing pickle. Responding to the challenge from the smaller companies, they are reissuing tons of archival material, but, having placed themselves in competition with their own backlists, they are running out of ways to justify their existence. In the superstores, the acres of disks remain, but the audience, surfeited, hasn't been buying so many of them recently. It can get lonely there at night, with only a few buyers flipping through the bins, looking for a new Caruso.

What's missing, of course, is excitement. Perhaps the way to find it is to give up illusion and fidelity and sampling rates and five-hundred-dollar rack systems and hundred-thousand-dollar high-end systems, and instead take the A train to Carnegie Hall or the Vanguard and shell out the cash to hear the only musical sound on earth that people everywhere agree is the Real Thing. Like all gratuitous pleasure, live music dies when it's over—which may be the hardest death of all for twentieth-century man to accept. ◆

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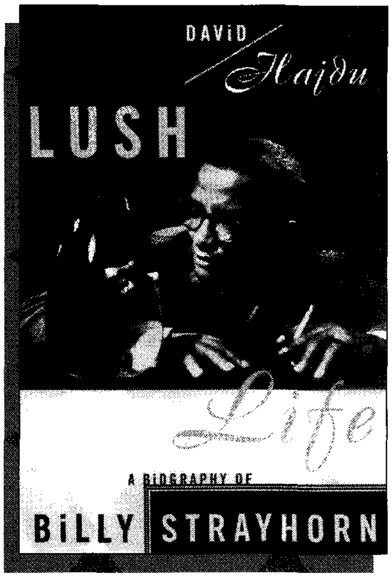

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ANNALS OF HIP

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Meet the Fugees.

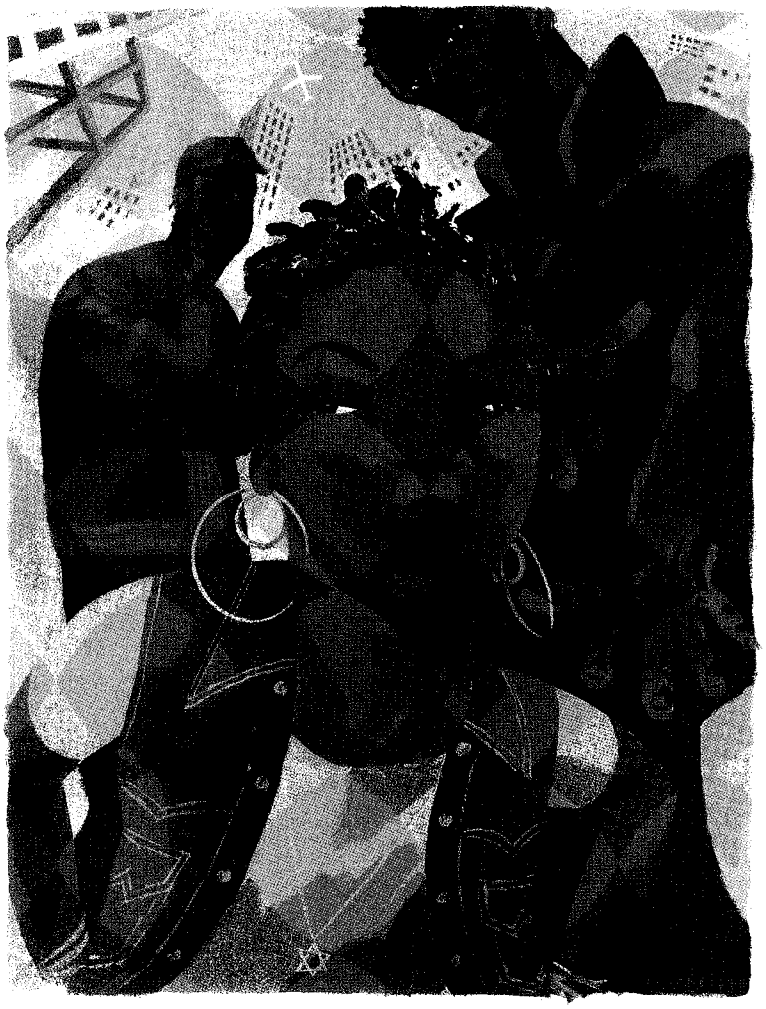
BY MARK SINGER

WHILE the Fugees were establishing themselves as the hottest hip-hop group on this planet—a niche they're certain to occupy for at least the next dog year—I was elsewhere. Mainly, I was home in bed, diddling with a laptop, writing an almost four-hundred-page book that the Fugees won't be able to ignore if, as I'm hoping, it gets turned into a three-and-a-half-minute rap video. I pecked away for three years, during which Lauryn Hill, Wyclef (Clef) Jean, and Prakazrel (Pras) Michel became the Fugees and released two albums. The first, "Blunted on Reality," came out in 1993 and sold a quarter million copies. The second, "The Score," showed up in stores last February and has already sold more than six million. "The Score" includes a hip-hop version of "Killing Me Softly with His Song," a 1973 Roberta Flack soft-core pop hit. This spring and summer, in the Western Hemisphere, you could avoid "Killing Me Softly" by staying away from coffee bars, hair salons, aerobics studios, and open windows. (Only temporarily, surely, elevators remain Fugees-free zones.)

Hunkered in my cave, I would every now and then hear apocalyptic noises—"*Rang dang diggah dee dang dee dang, Diggah dee dang dee dang diggah dee dang dee dang*"—percussing in the bedroom of my teen-age son, about twenty feet away. I always welcomed these invitations for meaningful dialogue with this interesting young person, whom I would find studying the ceiling or caroming off furniture as he grunted along with Grandmaster Melle Mel or Run-D.M.C. or LL Cool J. Adoringly, I would recap his options: (1) Turn It Down and Close Your Door, (2) Prepare to Die—both of which, I realize, will make superb titles when I get around to cutting albums of my own.

Until a few weeks ago, these encounters constituted the totality of my exposure to rap and hip-hop. Now, however, I have listened several times to both Fugees albums and have gone on tour with them for two whole days, including a conversation that lasted almost forty minutes, and I feel I have come to understand them completely as fellow human beings and artists. Let me rephrase that. What I mean is: I was given a thick sheaf of press clippings plus a couple of free T-shirts and some CDs, and I flew to Texas for a weekend and spent most of my waking hours waiting either in a hotel lobby or inside the Fugees' bus listening to their driver explain how much smoother things flow when he's chauffeuring Reba McEntire. Then, before I went home, Lauryn, Clef, and Pras all gave me autographs for my eleven-year-old neighbor, Emily, who was collecting my mail and newspapers while I was away, and that simple act of kindness led me to conclude that the Fugees are *excellent*. And I think the people at Columbia, which distributes their records, are incredibly lucky I'm such a cheap lay.

O.K., here's the truth: I really do like the Fugees, particularly "The Score." I knew "PARENTAL ADVISORY: EXPLICIT LYRICS" did not mean the words would be easy to follow. Yet I immediately picked up that the Fugees stand on the right side of many important public-policy issues, including the question of whether police should just go around shooting black people. They weave rhymes using "shit," "nigga," "bitch," "punk ass," "muthafucka," and "Newt Gingrich sucks dick" in a way that sounds both authentic and . . . not *that* bad. They're ironic, sincere, bohemian-retro, pro-family, and anti-gangsta. (Imagine Bill Clinton waking up tomorrow as a black rapper: this could be his shtick.) Between tracks are cool bite-size dramatic interludes of vérité free-verse 'hood palaver. On the other hand, if the Fugees were a pure novelty act—say, Sinatra impersonators who bit the head off the occasional chicken—I'd like them even more, and their reception by the public would probably be easier to explain. What they actually are is musical. Onstage, they're smart stylists who can vocalize and play instruments—Clef on guitar and keyboard, Pras also on keyboard. Especially when Lauryn has the mike, the audience becomes a rush-hour freeway of moving butts. In the studio, the Fugees and their techies clearly know what they're doing—assembling collages of recycled and retooled hard rock, soft rock, reggae, rhythm and blues, and whatever else feels right. On a song called "Cowboys," I distinctly heard a yodel.



Fugees Prakazrel Michel, Lauryn Hill, and Wyclef Jean: Six million records sold.

DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

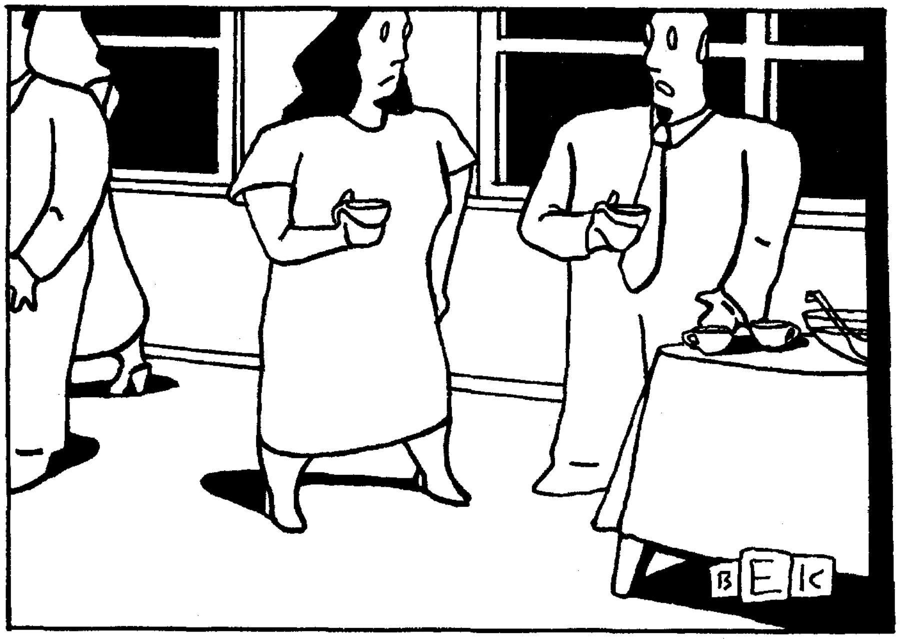
Lauryn and Pras met six years ago, during high school in South Orange, New Jersey, when she was fourteen and he was seventeen. Clef, who is now twenty-six, is Pras's cousin and also the son of a preacher who's proud of Clef but believes he makes "devil music." When Clef was nine, his family moved from Haiti, where he was born, to Brooklyn, and later they relocated in Jersey. Nowadays, according to the demands of Fugeedom, Lauryn (whose father is a management consultant and whose mother is a schoolteacher) drops into and takes leaves of absence from Columbia University, where she's a sophomore. In Paris last winter, Pras, the least approachable member of the group, met with a correspondent for the *International Herald Tribune*, who wrote, "It's hard to believe that 'Pras studied philosophy at Rutgers before leaving for a musical career,' as it says in their clips. On the other hand, it's easy to believe that he would make that hard to believe on purpose."

Bourgeois upbringings haven't deprived the Fugees of a loyal following among non-bourgeois kids who consider them as genuine as Tupac or N.W.A. or any of the other talents who keep William Bennett busy searching for loopholes in the First Amendment. Earlier this summer, the Fugees helped organize a free outdoor concert in Harlem to stimulate voter registration. They had already left the stage when gunfire erupted. No one got hit, and in the ensuing stampede no one got seriously hurt, so the net was a plus; the Fugees' street credibility didn't suffer a bit.

SINCE the beginning of the year, the Fugees have stayed on the road more or less non-stop. Most recently, they've been on a six-week expedition called Smokin' Grooves, along with half a dozen other hip-hop and reggae acts. The caravan started in Sacramento in late July and worked its way across the Sun Belt and up the East Coast before heading back to California by way of Canada. When I climbed aboard briefly, during Week 2, it was immediately evident that the Fugees had only a vague idea of their geographical coordinates. Which seemed perfectly understandable. More than seven thousand hormonally drenched future adults—about half of them, I reckoned, white suburban head bangers whose moms and dads didn't really want to think about where they were—paid up to thirty bucks a pop to see the fun at an amphitheatre in Dallas on a Saturday, and a similar number materialized at an identical-looking facility in Houston the next day. I don't know whether, while driving to the Sunday venue, any of the Fugees noticed the marquee of a hostelry called "Motel Couples $18." Anyway, that was a tipoff that they were no longer in Paris.

When the Fugees—accompanied by a drummer, bass player, and d.j.—came on for a fifty-minute set, Clef opened with a friendly warning: "Anybody caught sittin' down will leave tonight in a body bag." Then he did a Jimi Hendrix homage, using his teeth to twang the black anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Smoke filled the stage, a rainbow of overhead spots blinked, and Clef segued into an arrangement, from "The Score," of Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry," a gambit as avidly received as "Ave Maria" would be at an open-air gig in the Vatican. At one point, Pras, while dancing, collided with his keyboard and sent it crashing to the floor, a maneuver that reflected a keen instinct for showmanship: a pair of roadies rushed it offstage as if bearing a friendly-fire casualty to a triage unit.

While standing in the wings as Lauryn finished "Killing Me Softly," I almost got run over by Nas, a high-velocity rapper to whom the Fugees had yielded part of their time. The new wisdom among male hip-hoppers is



"I'm warning you—it's a long story. It starts when I was a Deadhead and ends with me buying a John Tesh CD."

that groping one's penis in public is no longer de rigueur. On the other hand, sagging—wearing your trousers *way down*—is not merely a fashion statement but a coveted skill. Nas almost has it mastered. He wore a tomato-red windbreaker and belted matching shorts that rode about an inch below his cheeks. Unable to defy gravity, Nas, while rapping a number called "If I Ruled the World (Imagine That)," constantly grabbed his crotch, a reflex that I recognized as a sign of modesty. Otherwise he would have been standing there in only his skivvies.

On the bus, the Fugees and I went through the motions of a formal interview, but none of us could muster any passion for the exercise. Nine months ago, nobody was clamoring to talk to the Fugees; now they meet the press several times a week, and it gets hard to avoid autopilot.

Lauryn, who has an articulate and straightforward show-biz polish, said, "All the issues I care about are right there in my songs. Usually, I pray for the things I want. I never once prayed to become a superstar. I never said, 'God, please let us sell six million records.' It just happened."

Pras, the most business-minded of the Fugees—a virtuoso of the cellular phone, I've been told—said, "Our job is not easy. We can't just sit back and sell records. I have people like parents buying my records, and Latinos and blacks and whites . . . which is dope. But I have a Fugee life, not a life life. It's like being married."

Clef, who tends toward a modest, what-me-worry drollness, said, "What's success? With a twinkle of an eye, it could shift, and it's over."

BACK in New York, I decided to follow the money trail, but the Fugees' manager, David Sonenberg, was out of town for a few days, so I checked in first with Larry Stanley and Hope Carr, a young married couple who are professional hip-hop deconstructionists. Larry's a lawyer with a specialty in intellectual property, and Hope "clears samples," which means that she listens to new music all day and vets it to make sure any borrowings from copyrighted melodies or lyrics have been properly acknowledged and paid for. They live in an apartment on the West Side with about five million CDs and a parakeet who used to be hyperactive until Hope figured out that listening to a rapper named Ol' Dirty Bastard calmed him down.

Inevitably, the Fugees' marketing triumph will spawn a backlash, but it hasn't begun in a measurable way. Larry and Hope, meanwhile, are ahead of the curve. For instance, though there's a critical consensus that Lauryn is extremely good-looking and has a mature silvery alto and star-quality presence, Larry says, "She can't sing. To me, it's expressionless and flat. It just doesn't have any dimension. It's just this sound that comes out of her mouth." Listening to a couple of tracks from "The Score," they picked out bits and influences—occasionally put-downs—of almost a dozen other individual performers or groups, among them Nas, Busta Rhymes, A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, and Dream Warriors. In one rap, Lauryn expresses contempt for wannabe m.c.s who don't have the chops:

Claiming that you got a new style, your attempts are futile,
Ooh chile, you're puerile, brain waves are sterile.
You can't create, you just waste the tape.

"That's pure Busta Rhymes diction," Larry said.

"It's nice poetry, but it's not terribly imaginative stuff," Hope added. "There's not a lot of metaphor."

Hope and Larry suggested that I solicit an appraisal from the female rapper Lil' Kim, formerly of Junior M.A.F.I.A., whose upcoming solo album, "Queen B," will feature lyrics that make the Fugees sound like the Von Trapps: "I got that bomb ass cock, a good ass shot, With hard-core flows that keep a nigga dick rock." When I got Lil' Kim on the phone, she surprised me by shifting into Miss Congeniality mode: "Lauryn's a totally different rapper than I am. She's one of my favorite female rappers. I've always personally been a big fan of the Fugees. I've always wished that they could become bigger than what they were. And now my wish has come true."

ONE of Clef's bottom-line-conscious raps goes:

On my day off with David Sonenberg I play golf
Run through Crown Heights screaming out "Mazel tov!"
Problem with no man; before black, I'm first human.

I went to see Sonenberg at his office, a brownstone on Riverside Drive that he refers to as "the house that Meat Loaf built." A forty-nine-year-old

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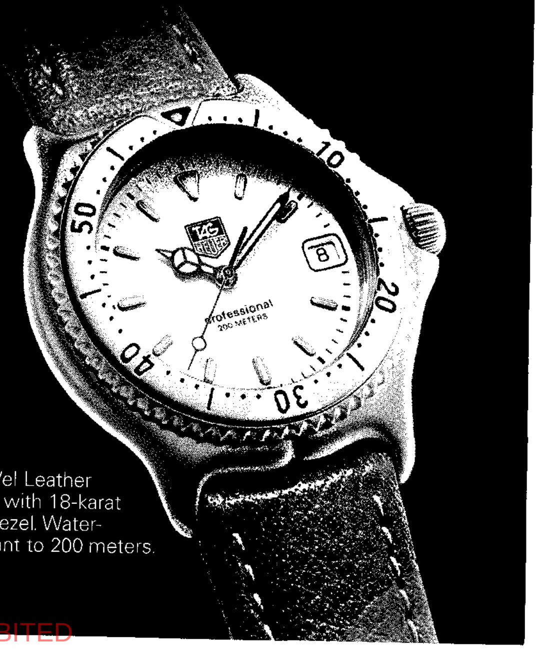
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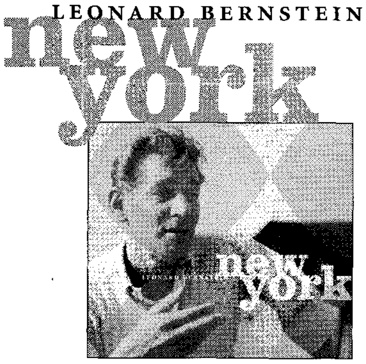

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lapsed musician turned lapsed entertainment lawyer turned music manager, Sonenberg likes to think of the coalescing of his destiny with that of the Fugees as “karmic.” Back in 1974, Sonenberg happened to attend a performance of an Off Broadway musical that featured Meat Loaf, who had no clue he would some day be transformed into a household name, upper case. Three years later, under Sonenberg’s managerial guidance, Meat Loaf gave birth to “Bat Out of Hell,” which went on to become the biggest-selling début rock album in history—thirty-five million copies. The experience of being caught in a sudden deluge of lucre, Sonenberg later concluded, “ruined me in many respects.” Now the Fugees, with his grateful complicity, are doing their best to ruin him once again.

Sonenberg recalls that it was 1987, maybe 1988, when he saw Clef in a play somewhere downtown. (“I’m thinking Off Off Broadway. It might even have been a church amateur production.”) Though Clef made a less profound first impression than Meat Loaf, something stuck. A couple of years later, Sonenberg heard from a legal client who had a recording studio in West Orange, New Jersey, about a group called Tranzlator Crew that had made some demos. When Tranzlator Crew arrived at Sonenberg’s office, he recognized Clef; that’s what made the whole thing seem like karma.

Rap had been out there for nearly a decade, but its appeal had escaped Sonenberg, whose specialty was alternative rock. What impressed him about Tranzlator Crew (eventually to be rechristened the Fugees—as in “refugee”) was that they cooked live music with eclectic ingredients. By 1992, they’d accumulated enough hip-hop material to look for a label, and Sonenberg formally became their manager and started inviting record companies to his office for auditions. These twenty-minute showcases featured three raps plus John Lennon’s “Imagine,” which Lauryn sang solo while Clef accompanied on acoustic guitar.

No one seemed much interested. Record-company presidents would show up, bringing along artist-and-repertoire (A. & R.) executives, and Sonenberg says, “The black A. & R. people would say, ‘Hey, this isn’t what’s happening.’ All they cared about was how dope, how ill, how phat was the vibe. I got the feeling many of them were looking at me and thinking, And who the fuck are *you*?” Invariably, a number called “Nappy Heads” would end with Clef standing atop Sonenberg’s Louis XIV desk, stripped to his underwear. “He was saying, in effect, ‘What the fuck I gotta do to get me a deal? I’m mad talented. Put me in the ballgame.’ ”

One day, Chris Schwartz and Joe Nicolo, two young guys from Philadelphia, came for the dog-and-pony show. Their label, RuffHouse, which was distributed by Columbia, had existed for three years, but they’d been around rap since its beginning, Schwartz on the promotional side, Nicolo in production. (Nicolo’s tape-editing skills had earned him the nickname The Butcher.) They’d worked with Schoolly D, perhaps the original gangsta—many aficionados regard his album “Schoolly D Saturday Night” as the subgenre’s Gutenberg Bible. One of their early successes was Kris Kross, a pair of twelve-year-old rappers who wore their clothes backward. Their first album, “Totally Krossed Out,” sold seven million copies, and a single, “Jump,” did three million. The crossover appeal of “Totally Krossed Out” became evident when Warner Bros. marketed a shirt showing Bugs Bunny and the Tasmanian Devil dressed backward and sporting dreadlocks. Seeing that, Nicolo and Schwartz—who to this day believe no corporate strategy session is complete without a rubber-band fight—knew they’d arrived. “I got misty-eyed,” Nicolo likes to say.

As the audition in Sonenberg’s office ended, Nicolo announced, “I don’t like it.” Long pause. “I *love* it.” RuffHouse has been the Fugees’ label ever since and has them under contract for five more albums.

These days, Sonenberg naturally has even bigger plans. When I dropped by, he had just returned from Los Angeles, where, he said, he entertained a half-dozen offers from film companies eager to make a Fugees movie, a sequel to the 1972 Jimmy Cliff classic “The Harder They Come.” The script already exists, and the plan is for the soundtrack to become the next Fugees album. “I pitched this six weeks ago," he said. "It feels real legitimate and everybody's reaction to the script has been fantastic. There shouldn't be a dry eye in the house. We'll be shooting in January."

A month after that, "When We Were Kings," a documentary about Muhammad Ali that Sonenberg co-produced, will be released nationwide. "In my view, Ali is the original rapper," Sonenberg told me. A new Fugees song, called "Rumble in the Jungle," will play over the closing credits and appear on a soundtrack album. In the meantime, the Fugees will perform during the upcoming MTV awards broadcast. They'll tour in Europe for a month, starting in September, and perform live, with Metallica, on MTV Europe in November. A Fugees Thanksgiving special on MTV, to be called "Give T'anks," is also in the works.

While Sonenberg was reciting this master plan, Pras arrived unannounced; the Smokin' Grooves Tour was playing Camden that night, and he had come to New York for the day. "You the man!" Sonenberg hailed Pras, who retired to an adjoining room to study the latest numbers in *Billboard.* Six million copies of "The Score"—already in the bank—are less than half what Sonenberg is counting on in the long run.

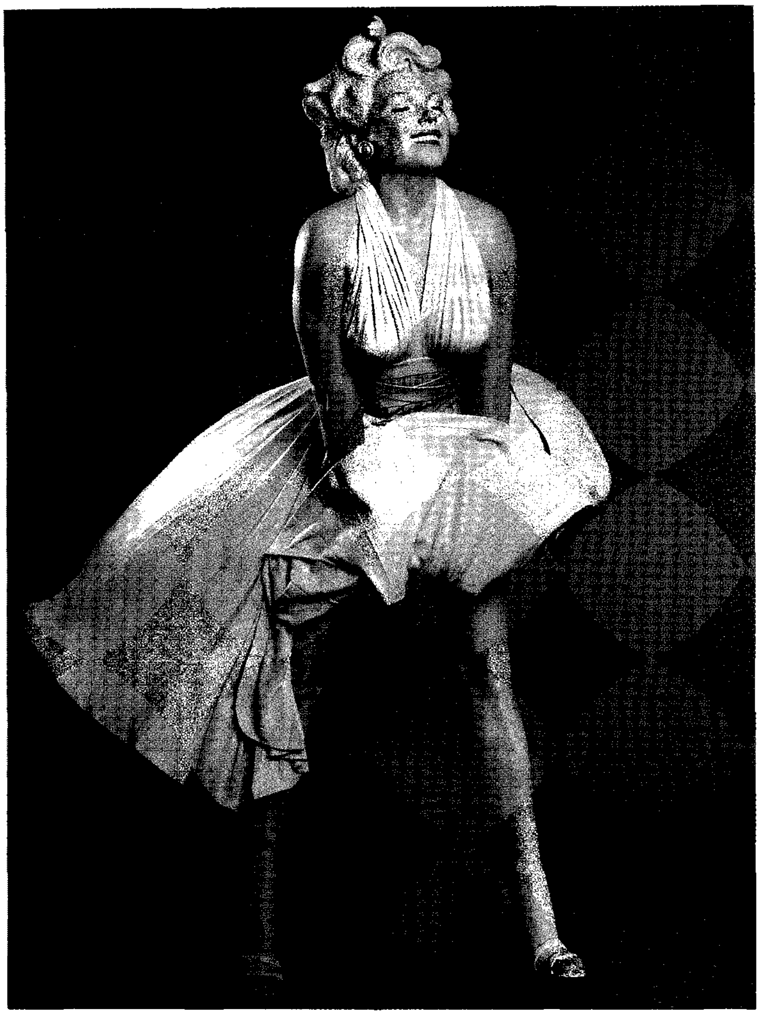
I asked how much the Fugees—just the three of them—would receive for each record sold. "They're certainly making a dollar a record," he said. I played with a calculator inside my brain and decided it was probably closer to a dollar-fifty—four bits apiece, times six or ten or twelve million.

"My expectation is that the 'Ready or Not' video"—the Fugees' latest—"is going to get into the consciousness of a lot of people," Sonenberg continued as I silently ciphered. "Even my Uncle Sidney loves the Fugees."

"Tell me about your Uncle Sidney," I said.

"My Uncle Sidney was a bootlegger, a regular at Yonkers Raceway, and one of the best pinochle players in Miami Beach. He smoked quality cigars, and he had excellent taste, particularly in women. Uncle Sidney just heard about all this. He isn't even walking the planet anymore, but he managed to get in touch to tell me that news of the Fugees has reached him and he's quite impressed. And he really digs the girl." ♦

J. SEWARD JOHNSON, JR.



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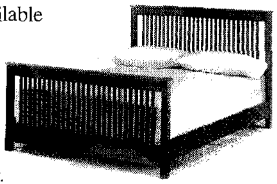

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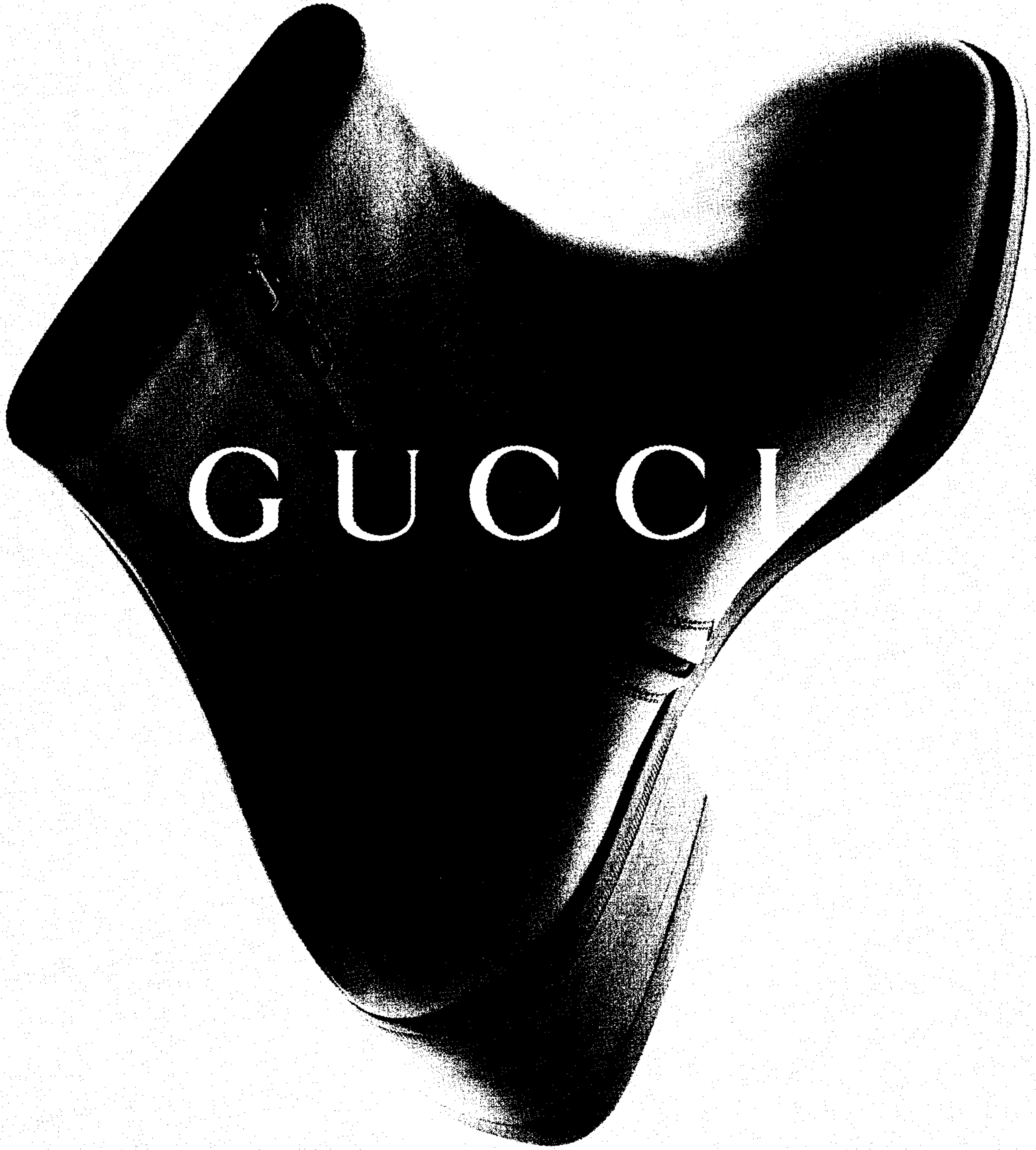

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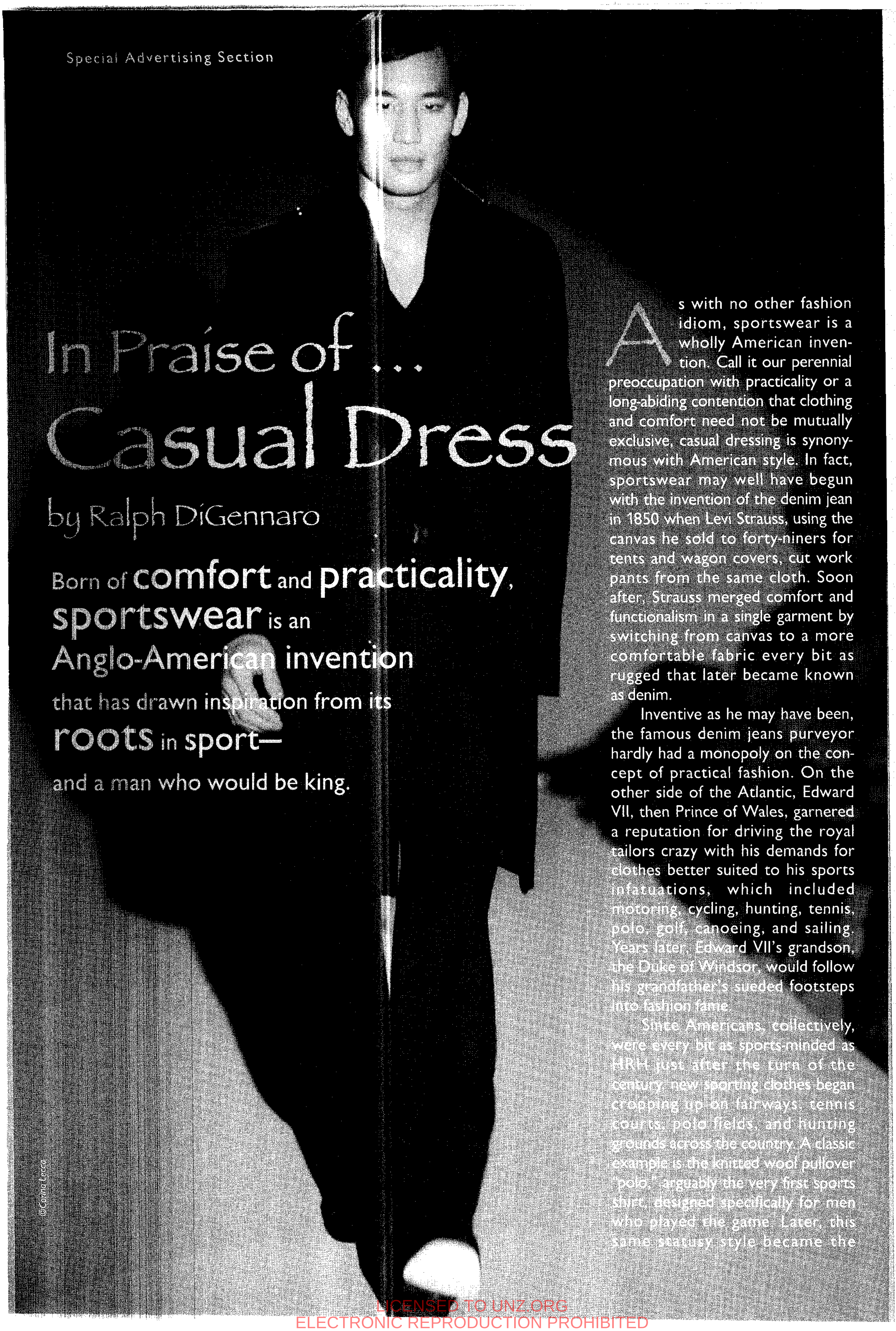

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In Praise of . . . Casual Dress

by Ralph DiGennaro

Born of **comfort** and **practicality**, **sportswear** is an Anglo-American invention that has drawn inspiration from its **roots** in sport—and a man who would be king.

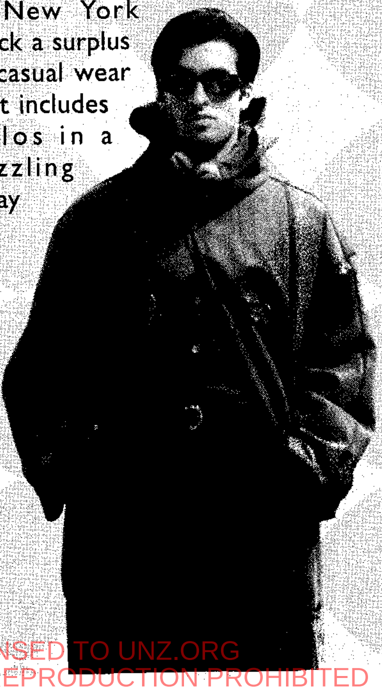
As with no other fashion idiom, sportswear is a wholly American invention. Call it our perennial preoccupation with practicality or a long-abiding contention that clothing and comfort need not be mutually exclusive, casual dressing is synonymous with American style. In fact, sportswear may well have begun with the invention of the denim jean in 1850 when Levi Strauss, using the canvas he sold to forty-niners for tents and wagon covers, cut work pants from the same cloth. Soon after, Strauss merged comfort and functionalism in a single garment by switching from canvas to a more comfortable fabric every bit as rugged that later became known as denim.

Inventive as he may have been, the famous denim jeans purveyor hardly had a monopoly on the concept of practical fashion. On the other side of the Atlantic, Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, garnered a reputation for driving the royal tailors crazy with his demands for clothes better suited to his sports infatuations, which included motoring, cycling, hunting, tennis, polo, golf, canoeing, and sailing. Years later, Edward VII's grandson, the Duke of Windsor, would follow his grandfather's sueded footsteps into fashion fame.

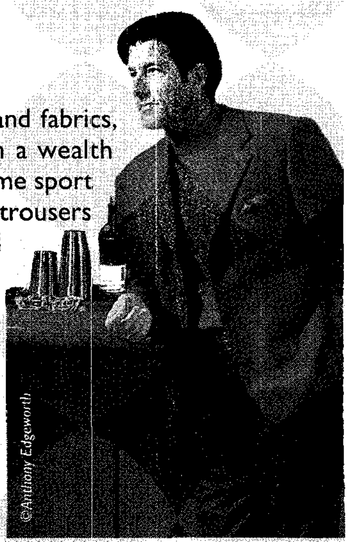
Since Americans, collectively, were every bit as sports-minded as HRH just after the turn of the century, new sporting clothes began cropping up on fairways, tennis courts, polo fields, and hunting grounds across the country. A classic example is the knitted wool pullover "polo," arguably the very first sports shirt, designed specifically for men who played the game. Later, this same statusy style became the model for the first tennis shirt. Other sports apparel was fashioned for golf (knickers and the bell-sleeved cardigan), hunting (safari or bush jacket, Norfolk jacket), riding (hacking jacket), boating (white cotton duck pants, blazer, and windbreaker) and rugby (sweater and striped knitted pullover).

While sportswear may well be a fashion tradition for Americans at play, it is only recently that casual dress began making its way up the corporate ladder, with many companies instituting a "casual Friday" dress policy. While some 75 percent of Fortune 500 companies now endorse dressing down on Fridays, especially in summer, few corporations issue guidelines on the parameters of propriety. To be sure, certain rules apply.

To begin, T-shirts and jeans are better left to weekend barbecues, football games, and bicycling. For men, neckwear is still appropriate for corporate casual, although a whimsical print or one in a bright, offbeat color works best, paired with a faded denim button down. Sport coats were practically invented for corporate casual, and pair well with a richly toned polo (mock or turtleneck). The wool or cashmere polo is also a great way to dress down a solid suit for a look that works in any casual Friday rule book.



Classic men's haberdashers such as Paul Stuart in New York stock a surplus of casual wear that includes polos in a dazzling array of colors and fabrics, along with a wealth of handsome sport coats and trousers that would put any style-conscious executive in good kit. Indeed, credit is due Paul Stuart for inventing the two-button sport coat, a more relaxed version of the three-button model that is once again popular.



©Anthony Edgeworth

Just as proper for casual Fridays at the office are cardigans, which look great with subtle plaid, check, or striped sport shirts whether buttoned up or open, and pleated casual trousers in quiet patterns and colors.

New to the sportswear category is the hand-tailored clothing of Rome-based manufacturer, Brioni. Debuting this fall is a complete collection called Brioni Sport, encompassing cashmere, silk, and merino wool cardigans, polos and turtlenecks, as well as wool, cotton, and silk sport shirts in highly sophisticated colors and patterns. Anchoring the Brioni Sport collection is a broad range of casual trousers, all made in Italy. For corporate executives whose taste runs toward casual elegance, Brioni Sport fulfills a genuine sartorial need.

Further along the cutting edge of the sportswear spectrum lies the rejuvenated Gucci, where American designer Tom Ford is breathing fashion life into the venerable house with every new collection. Streamlining the silhouette, Gucci's relaxed yet fitted approach to tailoring has altered the definition of sportswear in the Nineties. Carefully designed and constructed, Gucci's collection is meant to be worn with a studied nonchalance appropriate for a

On cover page: Gucci's slimmer sportswear line; Left: Supple leather casual coat by Fendi; Above: Tailored elegance from Brioni Sport.

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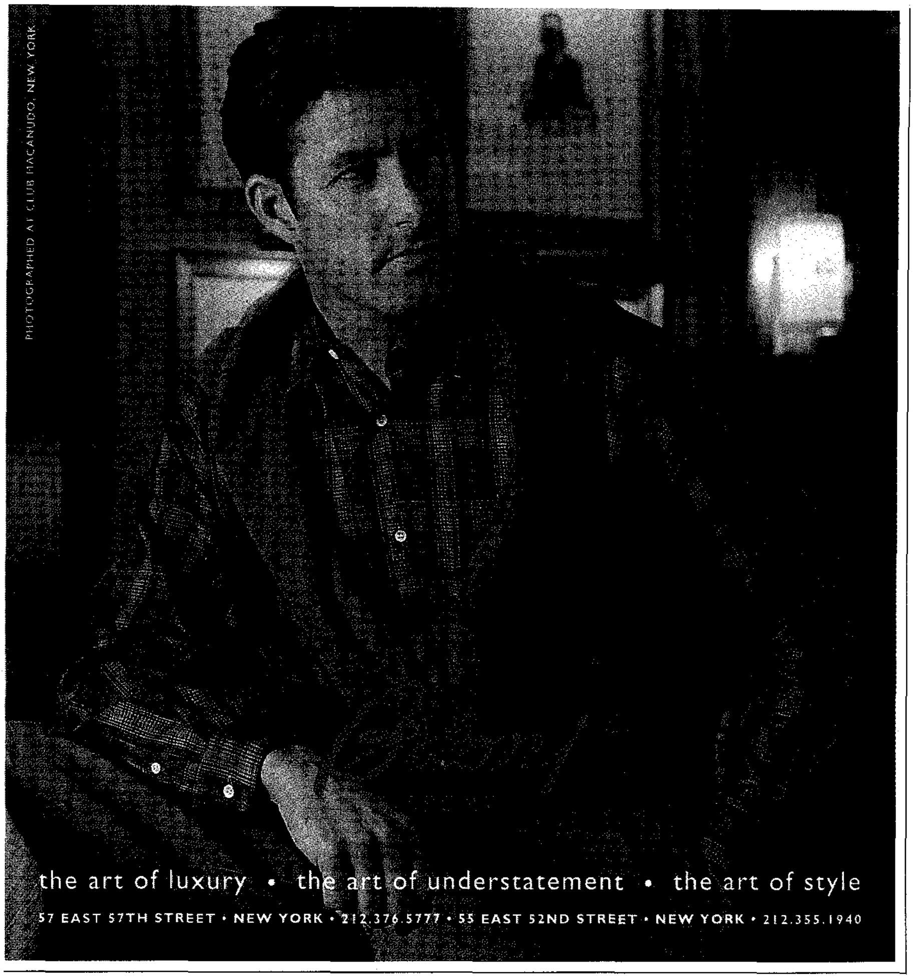
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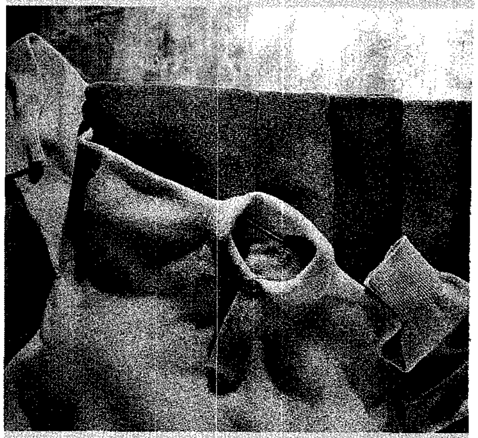
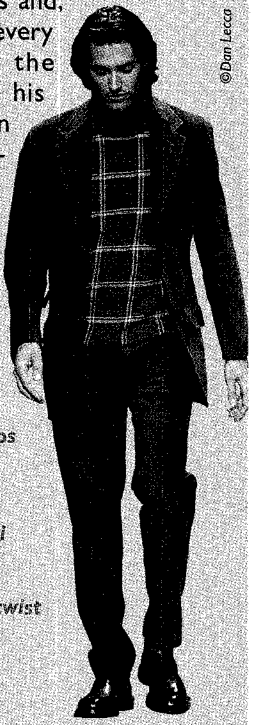


relaxed yet stylish work environment. For fall, deep colored silk shirts look great paired with Gucci's trimmer trousers worn under an updated version of the pea coat. As far as footwear is concerned, the rubber-cleat soled Gucci *scarpe de machina* (driving shoes) or the platform pony-hair shoe are perfect casual alternatives.

Americans may take credit for inventing sportswear, but Italian designers have made strides in championing the cause. Certainly no stranger to the advantages of comfort in clothing is Giorgio Armani, who singlehandedly demonstrated that suits could be at once casual and elegant. With his Giorgio Armani Le Collezioni label for men and women, the silver-haired designer continually offers a uniquely comfortable approach to style that purposely blurs the line between tailored clothing and sportswear. Armani's distinctively understated suit jackets and sport coats fit softly enough to feel like cardigans, ditto for his sportswear—from unconstructed jackets, sweaters, and outerwear to drapey trousers, jeans, T-shirts, and sport shirts—all in soft, sophisticated fabrics.

Long an established name in luxurious leather goods and furs, Rome-based Fendi is now producing a highly refined collection of clothing and sportswear for men under their own label. Employing fine Italian fabrics, their line reflects an appreciation for the classics with an eye to the young, modern ideas of a sophisticated lifestyle. Best from Fendi this fall are easy blazers, both woven and knitted, that work handsomely for casual Friday in the boardroom or at Sunday brunch. Equally versatile is the line's selection of simple, uncluttered jackets that may be dressed up or down, depending on the occasion.

The stateside designer most adept at putting a spin on the classics is Tommy Hilfiger, whose huge and eclectic collections have become the sportswear of choice for the twenty-something generation and beyond. From striped button-down shirts in a riot of color, to deconstructed jackets and casual-trousers, Hilfiger's signature clothing is so versatile that much of it is fast finding its way into offices on Fridays and, for that matter, every other day of the week. And with his new collection for women debuting in stores this month, men no longer have a monopoly on all the fun.



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***Above:** Knitted polos in autumnal tones from Paul Stuart;*
***Left:** Urban style à la Giorgio Armani Le Collezioni;*
***Right:** Traditional sportswear with a twist by Tommy Hilfiger.*

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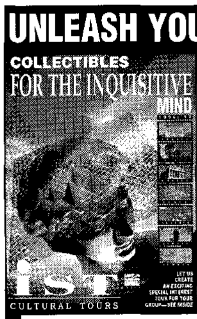
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NOTES FROM A FAN

A VOICE LIKE HOME

Jo Stafford and the mystery of why music moves us.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

ABOUT a dozen years ago, in a TV commercial for some airline, I heard the song "I'll Be Seeing You" for the first time. If I had heard it before, it had never registered, but now it really got to me, and I asked a friend of mine which recording of it I should buy. This was a guy I had known for a year but wasn't friends with until the day I corrected him and said no, Nelson Riddle didn't arrange the Ella Fitzgerald–Cole Porter "Songbook," Buddy Bregman did, and we both realized that we were sort of weird in the same way. He said to get Jo Stafford's recording. I had never heard of her, but I went to a record store and bought an album called "G.I. Jo" and took it home and played it. I think it was that night that I realized I was in love with this guy, and I know it was that night that Jo Stafford became my favorite singer.

Like "I'll Be Seeing You," the other songs on the album were associated with the Second World War; they were songs of farewell and of longing for return, of the permanence of the memory of love if not of love itself. The songs were so consistent in theme that you could make one big title out of them: "I Fall in Love Too Easily—It Could Happen to You—and You'll Never Know that I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen, but I Don't Want to Walk Without You, so I'll Walk Alone with No Love, No Nothin', though I'll Remember April, and, since We Mustn't Say Goodbye, I'll Be Seeing You." In all of them, Stafford sang with a voice that seemed to understand everything that was important to understand. It was low, warm, and rich—qualities that led one music writer to liken it to chocolate mousse. It was clear, unshowy, and direct, and yet there was a feeling of melancholy deep within it—melancholy contained rather than expressed.

Frank Sinatra says of Stafford that "it was a joy to sit on the bandstand and listen to her."

MICHAELE VOLLBRACH

You could say that it was a beautiful voice, even a perfect voice, but those words do not account for the emotional chemistry that takes place when that voice hits your ears. Its restrained gorgeousness carries a dual charge of intimacy and aloneness; the singer herself seems to disappear, while the voice remains to haunt you.

TODAY, Jo Stafford, who is seventy-eight and lives in Los Angeles, may be the least well-known of the great pop singers of the middle part of the century. During her recording career, which began in the late thirties, shortly before she joined the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, and started to slow down only in the late fifties (hello, Elvis; goodbye, Jo, more or less), she was ubiquitous. She recorded some eight hundred songs and had more than ninety singles on the charts. During the years of live radio, she logged thousands of hours of airtime, on others' shows and her own, and for a year she had a weekly television show. She was the top female singer of the early fifties; by 1954, she had sold twenty-five million records. The song that Stafford is most closely associated with today is undoubtedly her 1952 hit "You Belong to Me" (a title that draws a blank with many people, even those who were around at the time, until they hear the lilting first line: "See the pyramids along the Nile"). It was No. 1 for twelve weeks, sold two million copies, and was the third-best-selling record of the first half of the decade.

Stafford's repertoire was not confined to romantic and four-hankie ballads; her first No. 1 song, in fact, was "Tim-Tayshun," a hillbilly parody of "Temptation," on which Stafford, under contract to Capitol Records at the time, was billed as Cinderella G. Stump. She did show tunes and Tin Pan Alley stuff and the great American standards; she sang Scottish songs, folk songs, religious songs, and country songs; and though she couldn't by any stretch be called a blues or a jazz singer, she recorded a pleasant blues-flavored album and a terrific jazz album that featured the fine, fat saxophone of Ben Webster. It may be that her blurry image today has something to do with the great range of songs she sang: you can't pin her down.

Stafford's output is a mixed bag, especially after 1950, when she switched to Columbia Records, where pop singles were under the aegis of Mitch Miller—"I made some real turkeys at Columbia," she told me—but somehow she always managed to meet the material head on and to remain true to herself. People I spoke to about Stafford often referred to the purity of her voice; Mel Tormé, a connoisseur of singers, says, "First and foremost, she's the most in-tune singer on the planet." The bassist Charlie Haden, who has incorporated two shivery Stafford vocals—"Haunted Heart" and "Alone Together"—in albums he's made with his group Quartet West, says that "she sang with a passion that most great musicians play with." This was seconded by a formerly skinny kid from Hoboken who joined the Dorsey band a couple of weeks after Stafford. He was twenty-four and she was twenty-two; fifty-six years later, Frank Sinatra says simply, "It was a joy to sit on the bandstand and listen to her."

TEN years ago, I wrote Stafford a fan letter and requested a photograph. I asked her if she ever sang anymore, and she replied that the only singing she did nowadays was when she babysat for her grandchildren. A few weeks ago, I spent a couple of afternoons talking to her in her apartment in Century City, where she and her husband, the bandleader and arranger Paul Weston, have lived for fifteen years. (Weston was under the weather and couldn't join our conversations.) Stafford is about five feet seven, and looks contentedly grandmotherly. She has gray-green eyes, and her blondish hair is set in a wave that puts her squarely in her generation. She describes herself as shy, but she has a low-key sense of humor. When I asked her to tell me about the turkeys she'd recorded, she said, "Do you want to talk about 'Underneath the Overpass'?" How does it go? I asked. "It goes no place. It never did." Her speaking voice is gentle, low, and a little husky (she was a "dedicated" smoker until ten years ago), and it has a definite Southern tinge. Stafford is a California native—she was born in Coalinga, up north in oil country, and grew up in Long Beach—but her parents were from the mountains of eastern Tennessee. They came to California two months before Jo was born, in 1917, and she grew up surrounded by a host of transplanted Appalachian aunts and uncles and cousins. She drops her "g"s, as in "I was dancin' with my darlin' to the Tennessee Waltz."

Neither of Stafford's parents had a good singing voice, but her mother had strong musical tastes. "My dad and I used to have eternal arguments about the difference between Al Jolson and Bing Crosby," Stafford said. "I guess I think she knew what was good because she agreed with me." Jo's older sisters, Pauline and Christine, sang on local radio in Long Beach. Jo started singing "before I even remember," and she took piano lessons and read music by the time she was ten. When she graduated from high school, she had had five years of intensive classical vocal training. College was economically out of the question, and she joined her sisters (sister acts, sometimes filled out with a non-sister or two, were big

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in those days), who were now up in Hollywood.

For several years, the Stafford Sisters, in addition to working on movie musicals produced at M-G-M and Twentieth Century Fox, did "mountains of work" on radio, sometimes appearing as often as eight times a week: "We were very busy, and we were pretty good. There's no blend like a sister blend." In 1938, Jo and seven men formed a vocal group, and called themselves the Pied Pipers. Soon the group was whittled down to three men and Jo, and in 1939 she got a phone call from Tommy Dorsey inviting the Pipers to join his band.

IT may be wrong to romanticize the past, but when it comes to the big-band days there's just no way around it. I love the fact that the phone number of the Pennsylvania Hotel is still Pennsylvania 6-5000, just as it is in the Glenn Miller song. When my father talks about hearing a remote broadcast of Benny Goodman from the Glen Island Casino, I can almost see what that music *looked* like as it went out over the airwaves: like fireflies dancing in the air on a late-summer night. Stafford also loved the big-band sound: "I still love that sound. It just knocks me out. A group of real musicians playing together in a good arrangement is a marvellous musical kick." When she signed up with Dorsey, she became part of that world—hotel ballrooms, Greyhound buses, weeks and weeks of one-night stands all over the country, playing the Paramount. Stafford says that the life was "pretty gruelling" but that she had a lot of fun: "We took our work very seriously, but not ourselves. Of course, musicians have the best sense of humor in the world. There was great camaraderie, and the guys treated me beautifully." Sinatra affectionately recalls Stafford as "a real trouper," no matter what the circumstances: "The bus was quite uncomfortable and most often it was either too cold or too hot, but Josie never complained."

During the three years that Stafford spent with Dorsey, she sang several solos—not enough, in Sinatra's view—but she was perfectly content to be a Piper, and she stayed with the group for two years after they left the band. "Singing lead in a group is the most fun of all," she says. "Much more fun than singing solos." Her favorite singer was, and is, Sinatra. And, just as Sinatra recognized Stafford's potential for standing out, she appreciated his ability to fit in: "With Dorsey, the Pipers made a lot of records with Frank. You find very few solo singers who can adjust to being a group singer, which is complete discipline—you can't go off on your own. But when he sang with us he was a Piper. That takes respect for the music, and musical thoughtfulness."

Stafford herself has never liked to be the center of attention; she likes to sing, but she doesn't like to perform. In her whole career, she did only one night-club engagement, at the Martinique, in New York. "I'm basically a singer, period, and I think I'm really lousy up in front of an audience—it's just not me," she says. She always preferred the recording studio, partly because she had the obvious advantage of being able to do a number over again until she got it right, and partly because in the studio "you're performing in a very abstract way as far as your audience is concerned—you're not called upon to expose yourself to people." One of the things you don't hear in Stafford's voice is ambition, a yearning to be recognized. She was a famous singer, but she was never a "personality"—"much to the disgust of all the P.R. people who had to make up stories about me," she says. "They used to say, 'God, won't you do *something*?' I guess I am a pretty ordinary person." Yet Stafford's ordinariness, if that's what it is, is what makes her voice so compelling and so comforting: it makes me think of the way I used to feel when I was playing outside and I could hear my mother inside singing to the cat while she was making dinner.

STAFFORD may not have had ambition, but others had it for her. She refers to Johnny Mercer as "my old mentor and god," partly because she adored the songs he wrote, but also because he was largely responsible for making her a solo performer. Mercer was a co-founder of Capitol Records, and in 1944 Stafford became the first singer to be given a solo contract there. At the time, Capitol was one of the few record companies run by musicians, and business decisions were the consequence of musical decisions. Being a vocal star at Capitol in the forties was like being a movie star at M-G-M in the thirties; it was a singer's dream factory. Stafford has always felt lucky to have come along when she did, when good songs were plentiful and good musicianship was valued. "Supposing I had come along now," she said. "I'd be working in a See's candy store."

Capitol was also where she began working with Weston, whom she had known since the late thirties. (Stafford was then married to one of the Pied Pipers. She and Weston, who is now eighty-four, married in 1952.) Weston, a Dartmouth graduate from Massachusetts, had worked as an arranger with Dorsey and other bandleaders, and was now the A. & R. man at Capitol. Stafford soon was working almost exclusively with Weston; they thought the same way musically, and she felt more comfortable with him than with anyone else. She had it written into her contract that if Weston ever left Capitol she could leave, too, and in 1950, when he left to work at Columbia, she followed.

Stafford always sounded mellower than the other canaries of her day, and as time went on her voice became richer and deeper—markedly more so when she moved from Capitol to Columbia. She explained to me that the early recording techniques at Capitol made her voice sound higher and thinner than it was, and she added, "A lot of it was youth—as you mature, the sound gets fuller, and rounder. I was pretty young. And we recorded a lot in sharp keys, which is a more brilliant sound." Stafford's voice continued to grow in power through the years; probably her peak was the 1961 album "American Folk Songs," which was set to Weston's self-described Aaron Coplandish arrangements. Stafford first recorded these songs in 1947, when her voice was still a sun-dappled meadow; she re-recorded them in 1961, in stereo, when her voice had become a dark, inviting grove. Along with "G.I. Jo" and an album of Scottish songs she recorded in 1953, the songs on this album—they include "Shenandoah," "Poor Wayfaring Stranger," "Barbara Allen," and "Black Is the Color"—are her own favorites, and they are mine, too. All the longing that has ever existed is in those songs. I tried to convey to Stafford the effect that "Shenandoah" had on me by telling her about an experiment I once performed on my mother. I had a tape of "Shenandoah" in my Walkman, and I put the earphones on her without telling her what she was going to hear. In about thirty seconds, she had tears in her eyes. Stafford said, "My dad always cried at that. My sister plays 'Shenandoah' in her car and drives along the freeway weeping."

WHY? What *is* it about her voice? Stafford tried to oblige my constant prodding to get her to explain it, but, of course, there is no explanation. By way of indicating this, she said, "Somebody—a singer—once asked me how I controlled my vibrato. Well, I don't do anything about my vibrato. I just take in a breath and start singing and the vibrato is there of its own volition. I don't do anything consciously about it. I don't do anything consciously about anything except pay attention to my pitch, and knowing if I'm going to go for a high note how I'm going to prepare for that. But, as far as the voice is concerned, whatever comes out, you know, that's it." Stafford told me that she had received a lot of letters from soldiers during the war. One group wrote to her that right before lights out they'd have her recording of "Yesterdays" played over the intercom in their quarters. "Now, that's a kind of sad, forlorn song—but they liked it. They said it just reminded them of home and good things. And why? I'm not smart enough to know why."

Charlie Haden, whose roots are in country music—his parents sang on the Grand Ole Opry before he was born—remembers crying when he heard Stafford's version of the folk song "He's Gone Away." His family had sung that song, in a major-key, up-tempo-mountain-music version; Stafford's version is wistful and tender, as if she had picked up a piece of clothing once worn by a loved one and begun singing. When I said something to Haden about the melancholy I heard in her voice, he didn't say anything for a while. When he finally spoke, he said that Stafford's singing showed him that there was a way to be in the world and experience both the good and the bad "with humility, with dignity, and with maturity." He went on to describe the feeling that her voice called up in him and, at the same time, said possibly everything there is to say about music: "It evokes appreciation of life and how precious life really is—whether there's sorrow and tears or happiness and joy, you're reminded that you're lucky to be here." ◆

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

PASSING THE BATON

What C.E.O.s could learn from the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

BY JAMES TRAUB

EUGÈNE MIHAESCO

IN his essay “Considerations on Representative Government,” John Stuart Mill takes on the argument for benevolent dictatorship. Even in the most humane instances, he observes, such a system will entail “one man of superhuman mental activity managing the entire affairs of a mentally passive people.” For Mill, the arrangement is intolerable: “Wherever the sphere of action of human beings is artificially circumscribed, their sentiments are narrowed and dwarfed in the same proportion.” This leads him to the virtues of democracy: by liberating the moral and intellectual energies of its members, he argues, a democratic society will be not only more just but more productive than even the most benevolent dictatorship.

Most of us, of course, don’t need to be persuaded on this score; we are all democrats now. And yet we still take it for granted that in certain activities the need for final authority is so overwhelming that the model of the benevolent dictatorship must still apply. The military is an obvious example. Another is the symphony orchestra, operating under the tutelage of a wise and omnipotent conductor. An orchestra, after all, is a community of people dedicated to achieving a degree of unanimity that is almost unimaginable in a democratic society. Federico Fellini even made a movie, “Orchestra Rehearsal,” in which an unruly orchestra served as the potent symbol of the dissolution of civil society. According to Richard Hackman, a Harvard psychology professor and an expert in teamwork, who, with two colleagues, has been studying musical organizations since 1989, virtually every major orchestra in the world operates according to the model of an all-powerful leader whose minions exist to do his bidding.

Apparently, the system works, since

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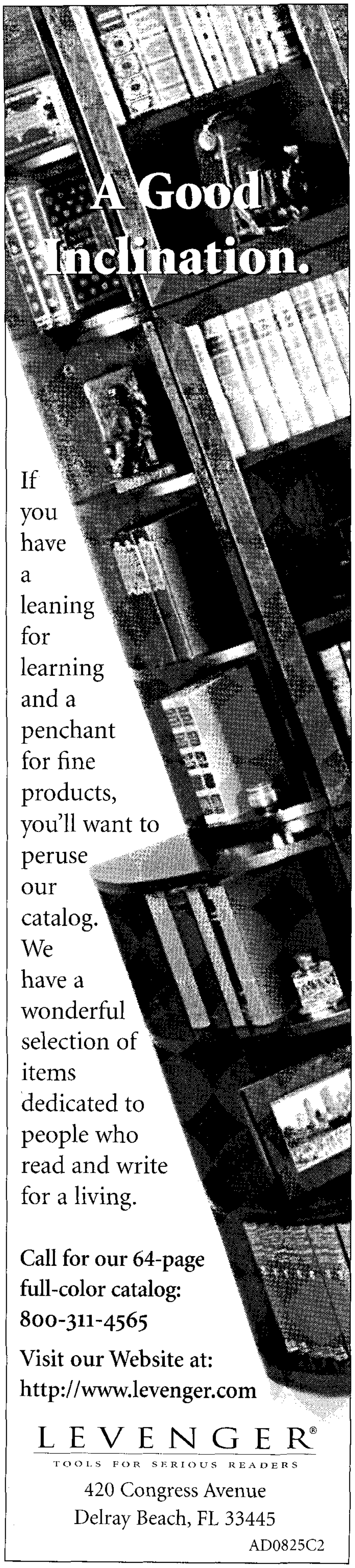
Hackman has found that even the most miserable and beaten-down musicians can produce wonderful music. But recently he has begun studying the world's handful of orchestras in which the musicians themselves exercise ultimate control. At least one of them, he has concluded, conforms to the Fellini model: democracy gets in the way of the music. Yet he has found one group that has succeeded in making magnificent music in a non-authoritarian setting: a New York-based organization called Orpheus, a chamber orchestra that not only plays without a conductor but rotates among its instrumentalists the traditional leader positions of concertmaster and "first-seat" players. Hackman thinks that Orpheus has achieved its greatness not despite the absence of fixed leadership but because of it: each member is compelled to take personal responsibility for the music. "Most orchestras leave a lot of talent on the table," he says. "You wonder how transcendental a particular performance could have been if the musicians had been as engaged as the Orpheus musicians are."

THE Orpheus Chamber Orchestra is an anomaly in its own time—a throwback to a pre-Romantic model of music-making. The orchestra in the time of Haydn and Mozart was far smaller than its modern equivalent, and was often conducted by a seated instrumentalist. From Beethoven on, as music became grander and more complex orchestras became larger, and the conductor was forced to stand up; but well into the nineteenth century the composer was frequently his own conductor. The conductor as we know him today—the figure who neither makes nor plays music but, rather, evokes it, through some magic involving the waving of a wand—dates from the second half of the nineteenth century: the age of Bismarck and Nietzsche and Wagner. The conductor as supreme "maestro" represented a romanticization of the idea of authority—the heroic figure who quelled the raging disorder of the crowd to produce harmony and order. He was the benevolent despot par excellence. In our century, the epitome of the superstar conductor was Arturo Toscanini, and it was this quintessentially nineteenth-century figure who created the mold for conductors to come. According to the musicologist Norman Lebrecht, the author of an irreverent critique of the species entitled "The Maestro Myth," Toscanini "was brutal to orchestras and created a cult of brutality that other conductors copied as a token of their authority in an authoritarian era."

Partly because of the exigencies of music-making and partly because of the persistence of the Romantic ideal, the imperial conductor has survived relatively unchallenged into our own, anti-authoritarian times. When Julian Fifer, the founder of Orpheus, was a talented cellist preparing to graduate from Columbia University, in 1972, he was appalled by the prospect of spending his life working under such despotism. Fifer, though scarcely a radical, was a member of a group called Music for Peace, and was active in the anti-war movement. "The symphony orchestra was the equivalent of the military-industrial complex for a Columbia student at that time," Fifer recalls. He and several fellow-students decided to create their own orchestra, with no master over them. Shortly before Fifer's graduation, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra gave its first concert, at a local church. Box-office receipts totalled a hundred and eleven dollars. With its aim of, in Fifer's words, "bringing music to the people," Orpheus gave its next concert at Co-Op City, a vast middle-income housing development in the Bronx. Orpheus was like the musical form of a commune or food co-op—a visionary project that, in the normal course of things, seemed likely to vanish with the Aquarian Age itself.

Instead, Orpheus's history reads like a laboratory experiment in the durability of utopian principles. In its early days, which Fifer and the other veterans still recall with a certain wistfulness, the orchestra consisted almost entirely of young, idealistic musicians who were willing to accept relative poverty in exchange for artistic freedom. Meetings were held at the Empire Szechuan, a restaurant on upper Broadway. All decisions about repertoire and personnel were made collectively. Rehearsals were governed by the principle that anyone could say anything at any moment. The pianist Richard Goode, who has played with Orpheus many times during the past fifteen years, recalls, "Someone would bring up a particular bowing. Forty-five minutes later, the bowing would be voted on, and we could go on." Sometimes the system pro-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duced superb music, and sometimes it produced a muddle. "If half the orchestra wanted a fast tempo, and the other half wanted it slow," Eriko Sato, a violinist, recalls, "we would play in the middle." It was a bit like the world of "La Bohème"—high-spirited, spontaneous, and precarious.

From the outset, Orpheus attracted some of the most talented, and intrepid, young classical musicians in New York. By 1978, when the group gave its first Carnegie Hall concert, it was playing with such leading young American soloists as the pianists Emanuel Ax and Peter Serkin. In 1984, Orpheus was signed by Deutsche Grammophon to record the entire range of the chamber-orchestra repertory. It joined such attractions on the German label as Herbert von Karajan, the Vienna Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein, and Maurizio Pollini—extraordinary recognition for an American group. Orpheus was no longer a novelty; it was a world-class orchestra. Now its members faced the challenge of adapting to this new status without endangering its founding principles. The first new decision was to elect a concertmaster for each piece, but when this proved to be contentious and cumbersome the task of choosing concertmasters was turned over to an executive committee of musicians. Nevertheless, the system was still too all-out democratic to be musically efficient. "Many of us were really frustrated with the slow pace of interpretative evolution in the rehearsal process," Fifer recalls. Consequently, Orpheus developed a system it calls "the core," in which the executive committee chooses a concertmaster, and each instrumental section a representative, for every piece; this group works through questions of interpretation and phrasing before the orchestra's first full rehearsal. Orpheus thus passed from the primitive stage of pure democracy to a representative form of government. Predictably, this caused unease, and only within the past three or four years has the core become a routine element of the Orpheus system. Even so, Eric Bartlett, a cellist, says, "There's a constant reciprocating motion back and forth: 'Why hasn't this decision already been made? What has the core been *doing*? Did you *have* a core?' " This, Bartlett says, is often followed by "So, everything's decided. We don't get to have any input here—what, we just show up for work?" Such, of course, are the stresses of representative democracy.

I FIRST caught up with Orpheus when the players were beginning to rehearse for a Carnegie Hall concert this past May. The rehearsal was held at Riverside Church, the splendid Gothic pile near Columbia University, where Fifer and the rest of the Orpheus office staff are quartered. At 10:15 A.M., the musicians began drifting in, toting their instruments. Most were in jeans; a few were carrying a snack in a child's lunchbox. Only about half of the orchestra's twenty-six musicians were present, since this was the core that had been selected for a hellishly difficult piece entitled "Trans," an Orpheus commission from a Boston-based composer named Lee Hyla. After much scraping of chairs, the musicians arranged themselves on the stage in a crescent, at the center of which was a distinctive blank space—the space where a conductor would normally stand. Instead of looking front and center, the musicians looked to the co-concertmasters, Eric Bartlett and Mitchell Stern, a violinist. On a signal from Stern, the strings sawed away frantically for a few measures, which was all it took for them to scramble the tempo. Stern shouted, "Stop, stop, *stop!*" and the rehearsal dissolved into general conversation, as Orpheus rehearsals often do. The players questioned one another on technical points. "Is it two-four or one-two?" asked Frank Morelli, a bassoonist, adding, "I forgot my slide rule." The general feeling was that "Trans" should be played by mathematical, rather than musical, instruments. One wind player said sarcastically, "I *love* it. It's so . . . lovely." Bartlett observed solemnly, "It's one of those flailing, *visual* pieces."

The piece was obviously driving the musicians nuts, and they weren't loath to say so, even after Hyla himself arrived. Stephen Taylor, an oboist, complained, "If we had some idea how it's going, we could pull people along. Frankly, we're not doing that." Pulling people along is, of course, what conductors do, and "Trans" was precisely the kind of piece on which the collective intelligence could have been focussed by the clear instructions of a baton-wielding overseer on a podium. Instead, for three hours the group picked its way through the unfamiliar thickets of notes and markings, trying to make the rapidly shifting meters mesh, marking the critical spots where the musicians would look to one another for cues, and quizzing Hyla—who was sitting on the stage surrounded by sheets of the score—about his intentions. They were like students working together on an exquisitely hard math problem. There was a lot of frustration, but it was with the problem rather than with personalities. At only one point did things get tense. "One thing, Mitch," David Jolley, a French-horn player, said to Stern. "I don't think you should wave your bow. I think it's a bad idea."

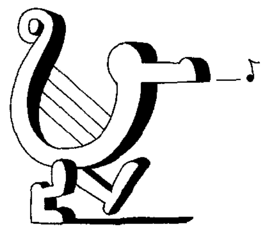
Stern, taken aback, said, "I was always told it was a *good* idea."

Sarah Clarke, a violist, quickly put in, "You think we'll get too dependent?"

"Or co-dependent?" someone added, taking the edge off the moment. Thereafter, Stern cued with his head, not with his bow.

Later, while I was talking to Eric Bartlett, he brought up Jolley's admonition about bow-waving, and said, "There was an undercurrent of, 'That's just not done,' maybe because so many of us have sort of a backlash against conductors." What Orpheus is all about is *listening*. The players fear that if they fall into the habit of looking too assiduously for cues from the concertmaster they'll lose the intensity of their engagement with one another. The difference between "conducting" with a bow and cuing with a movement of the head, Bartlett pointed out, may be symbolic, but for the Orpheus musicians it's a potent symbol. To them, following the concertmaster's bow represents musical submission. "When you play in an ordinary orchestra, there's a clear limit to your responsibility," he explained. "You're expected to show up and play well and do what the conductor says. It's a lot like typing. Everybody's afraid to question the conductor. People develop these tremendous conflicts to the point where they can barely speak to each other. We're always fighting with each other, but we're always fighting it *out*."

Like typing! I was astonished to hear the contempt with which Orpheus musicians described the experience of playing in a conventional orchestra, a job that most of them, including Bartlett, know at first hand. During a break in another rehearsal, David Jolley turned to me and said that when he plays in the summer music festival at Aspen he has to remind himself to call the conductor "Maestro," to say "Yes, sir," and not to show that he's enjoying himself. It is a truism within Orpheus that most full-time symphony musicians are thoroughly alienated from their work. I tended to discount this as hyperbole—a sign of the Orphean pride of citizenship. But then, reading one of Professor Hackman's studies, I came across a striking finding: while symphony musicians score extremely high on questions designed to measure "internal motivation," they rank seventh among thirteen occupations—right behind federal-prison guards—on "general satisfaction." This, Hackman says, is precisely the outcome you would expect when people with a highly cultivated talent are forced to submit to an absolute authority.



Perhaps it can't be otherwise. Symphony orchestras are simply too big to function as participatory democracies. Michael Haber, a cellist who has played both with Orpheus and with the Cleveland Orchestra under the famously autocratic George Szell, describes a symphony orchestra as "an organism with two hundred hands and one brain." Haber adds—and Orpheans would grudgingly agree—that a genius like Szell can "produce a level of understanding and profundity that is rarely reached by a committee."

It's not hard to understand why many of the finest musicians in the New York area are attracted to Orpheus. And yet freedom has its considerable costs. Orpheus is a psychologically delicate organism, full of old rivalries and hurt feelings and spent romances, all of which occasionally rise to the surface. William Purvis, a horn player, says, "You get a sense of the group psychology being at times arrogant—'We don't need a conductor.' But what goes along with that is group self-doubt and individual self-doubt. It's a harder situation to play in than almost any other I can imagine." The presence of a conductor/paterfamilias offers reassurance; the musical performance is, in the end, his interpretation and his burden. With Orpheus, as Purvis notes, "it's never any one person's interpretation that comes out." How, then, can you be confident that it's right? And how, in any case, can twenty-six intelligences produce a coherent work of art? Last fall, an Orpheus performance of the Beethoven Second Symphony was criticized as charmless, and David Jolley, who did not take part in it, says that the criticism may have been warranted: "I could imagine us just sort of pounding away, adding more and more energy, more and more intensity, until it was just merciless. Some old Viennese guy would say, 'No, no, no, no,' and, with a flick of the arm, you'd have it. We have to work all that out ourselves, and we have to argue it out ourselves. Sometimes we're reinventing the wheel."

Freedom is hard; freedom is inefficient. Orpheus routinely spends thirty hours preparing for a two-hour con-

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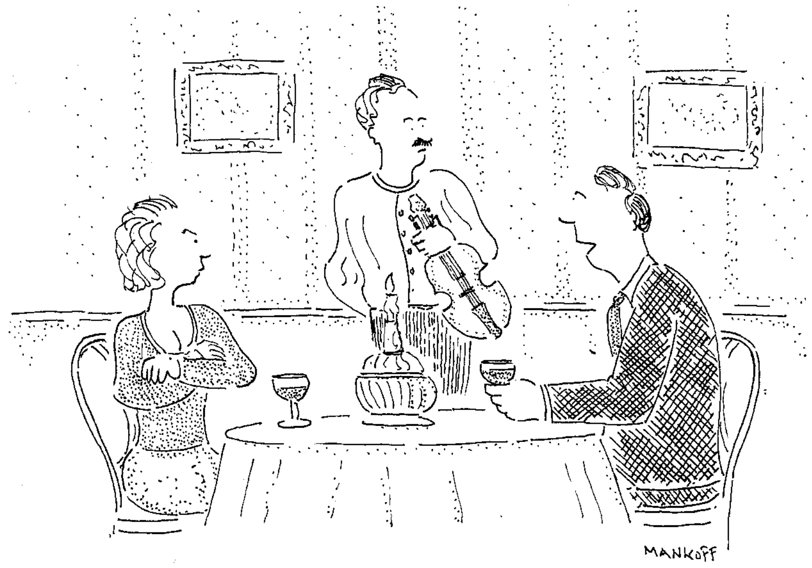
cert—three times as much as a typical orchestra. And yet it's precisely this painstaking process of arriving, almost unconsciously, at a shared vision that accounts for Orpheus's distinctive sound. Christian Gansch, who has produced many of the group's CDs for Deutsche Grammophon, says, "The music is so much coming *from* them that it makes a deep kind of sense." When soloists talk about Orpheus, a note of something approaching awe creeps into their voices. "I still don't quite understand how Orpheus works," the pianist Alfred Brendel, who has played with the group on numerous occasions, says. "I still can't understand how they play so unfailingly together. How do they divine what's going on?" The answer, he suggests, lies in the musicians' sense of trust, the intensity with which they listen to one another, and the responsibility that each player takes for the entire score, and not just his own part. And this process of adjustment and meshing occurs not only among the musicians but between the whole group and the soloist. Richard Goode, who has been recording Mozart piano concertos with Orpheus, says, "Sometimes there's a kind of magical sense that, whatever you happen to do, they're right there." It is as if the process that Orpheus uses to achieve a sense of common purpose reproduces itself in the harmony of the music.

ORPHEUS may well be a model of the just society; but, with only twenty-six citizens, it's an exclusive one. What the group does illustrate is the democratic workplace that some management theorists and popular writers about management, like Tom Peters, co-author of "In Search of Excellence," have been recommending for years. As Orpheus's reputation has grown, business groups have come to Julian Fifer for advice. Earlier this month, Fifer participated in a symposium on Orpheus at the Academy of Management's annual meeting. Richard Hackman is currently preparing a multimedia case study of Orpheus which he hopes to use as a teaching device both for orchestra leaders and for private-sector managers.

One of the issues that interest Hackman is that, while Orpheus is a conductorless orchestra, it is not, as he puts it, "a leaderless orchestra." There is leadership, but it changes from piece to piece, and even *within* a piece. The trick that Orpheus has pulled off is to establish authority without establishing an authority figure. One of the great crises in the group's history occurred in the early eighties, when one violinist began to act like a virtual dictator every time she became concertmaster, brushing aside all differences of opinion with maestro-like brusqueness. This was a violation of the Orphean categorical imperative, and it led to an atmosphere of rancor and tension. But open confrontation was also a violation of principle, and so five or six years passed before the woman was finally asked to leave, temporarily, the regular rotation of concertmasters. Instead, to widespread relief, she quit. Sometimes the concertmaster has been unable to project *enough* authority to give twenty-six individuals full coherence. About fifteen years ago, two violinists were removed from the concertmaster rotation. It was, Nardo Poy, a violist, recalls, "a very painful issue," especially since the excluded violinists had been with Orpheus from the outset. "We had to decide: Do we accommodate people's feelings, or do we accommodate the group's wishes to have the best leadership possible at all times?" On that occasion, the musical imperative won out over the etiquette of group interaction.



"Do you know 'Love Stinks,' by the J. Geils Band?"

ORPHEUS has one flaw as an organizational model: the sacrifice it asks of its citizens is economically unsustainable. The most a member can earn is about thirty-five thousand dollars, and that requires a commitment of time almost equal to that of a regular job at an ordinary orchestra. The schedule that many of the musicians follow just to make ends meet is horrendous. Frank Morelli plays with eight musical organizations, and maintains a heavy teaching schedule as well; Mitchell Stern told me that he couldn't recall the last time he'd had a day off. "A lot of people have to make a choice between Orpheus and something else, because of the financial pressure we all have to deal with," Poy says. Four years ago, Guillermo Figueroa, one of Orpheus's earliest members and one of the most devoted tenders of its flame, announced that he had agreed to become concertmaster of the New York City Ballet Orchestra. Figueroa now plays a sharply reduced schedule with Orpheus. "When he took that job," Julian Fifer says, "it shook our notion of ourselves as a family staying together through life."

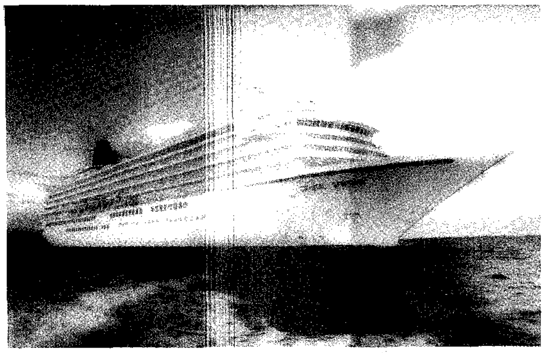
Four years ago, the musicians were so disgusted with their pay and their benefits that they sought to make the American Federation of Musicians their bargaining agent. This provoked the greatest crisis in the orchestra's history: Orpheus was about to split into "labor" and "management." Some members of the board of directors threatened to quit if the musicians brought in the federation to bargain for them. And the musicians blinked. They understood, Morelli says, that "this could have spelled the end of Orpheus." The issues were finally adjudicated by a salary-and-benefits committee, but money remains the wedge that could split up Orpheus. Though the group had always taken the view that membership is a lifetime guarantee, last year the members voted to institute a minimum-participation rule, requiring each member to attend at least thirty-five per cent of all performances and recording sessions. One player has already been drummed out; others are imperilled. There is a stronger sense than ever before that Orpheus is a fragile institution.

Julian Fifer sounds a valedictory note as he recalls the bygone days of all for one and one for all. He himself was simply first among equals until 1990, but then he laid down his cello to become Orpheus's full-time executive director. He is now the white-collar boss of a society of workers—a sort of musical kibbutz—and several of the musicians told me that Fifer is no longer in a position to understand their problems. Frank Morelli mentioned the wisdom of seeking "new management" for the group, though he didn't seem to have a putsch in mind. Fifer has heard it all before, and, plainly, it hurts. One afternoon, when I dropped by his office, he groped for a metaphor to describe his worries about spiritual decline. "It's as if we began as a shoot coming out of the ground," he said, "and now we've grown into a big tree trunk with branches that are spread out and opposed to one another. There isn't quite the old sense of common purpose." It's as if the group were trying to resist the law of physics which holds that different things become normal over time.

As the Carnegie Hall concert drew closer, the various cores gave way to the full orchestra, and the music began to come together. But Lee Hyla's "Trans" still had everyone in knots. The winds and the strings kept getting out of synch. During one rehearsal, Morelli and the other bassoonist, Dennis Godburn, just stopped, and, as the others raced by, Morelli shouted, "Yoo-hoo! Hey!" There was a constant murmur of "Sorry." Eric Bartlett produced a metronome, and you could hear it ticking away under the violent surface disorder of the music. Bartlett was one of those who found the piece fascinating; others plainly considered it a waste of time—a Rubik's cube without a solution. "Trans" seemed to be testing the limits of the conductorless orchestra. One day, I called Hyla, who had attended most of the rehearsals. "It's beginning to sound pretty much the way it sounded in my head," he said. "It's actually quite a beautiful experience." He told me that he had responded to the Orpheus commission by writing a piece that most conductors couldn't have handled properly, because of the difficulty of beating out two tempos at once. But he wasn't worried about the outcome. "They're such unbelievably professional musicians as well as good musicians," Hyla said.

As the players filed onstage for the Carnegie Hall concert, they settled themselves in their characteristic crescent, arrayed around that glaring blank space. The orchestra launched into the opening piece, Giovanni Simone Mayr's "Elisa" overture. It was just chamber fluff, but Orpheus attacked it with gusto and with perfect precision. The excitement came not only from the brilliant sound but from the feeling that the musicians were playing as much for one another as for the audience. The Mayr work was followed by a selection of songs from Mahler's "Des Knaben Wunderhorn," based on folk poems of wild and varying moods. Here, in the emotional heart of the evening, you could feel both the depth and the delicacy that Orpheus is capable of, as well as its remarkable sensitivity to Thomas Hampson, the baritone soloist. Following the intermission, the orchestra plunged into "Trans." The piece emerged, miraculously, as *music.*

During the intermission, I had introduced myself to a spare, gray-haired woman sitting in front of me, and she turned out to be Anne Draper, who was the first president of Orpheus's board of directors. When I asked how Orpheus had changed over the years, she replied, "They've evolved toward even greater unanimity of expression." She had been overwhelmed by the Mahler songs, she said, and had, once again, after hearing hundreds of the group's concerts, been overwhelmed by the spirit of the enterprise. "Most of us who hang around with these musicians try to carry the group's values into the rest of our lives," she told me. "You have to be willing to spend time talking; if necessary, to fight; if necessary, to disagree; if necessary, to draw blood. You have to be willing to become Orphean." ♦



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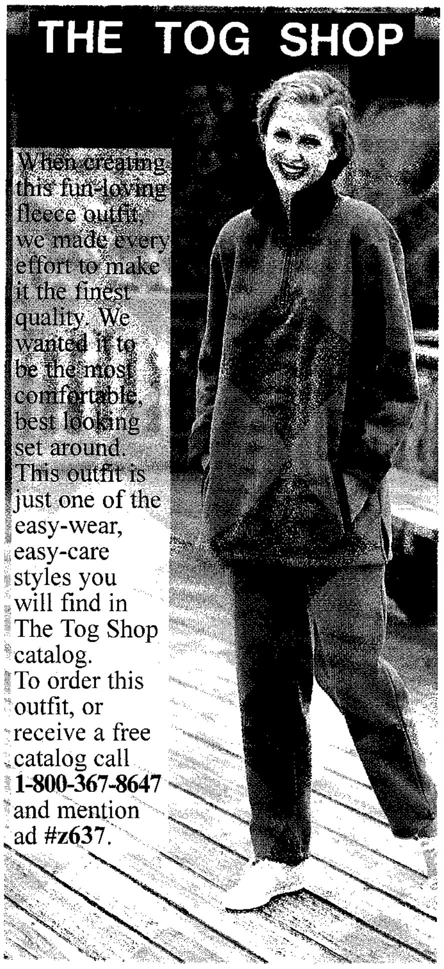

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ANNALS OF POP

HE'S A LITTLE BIT FUNNY

Elton John, or how to survive twenty-five years at the top.

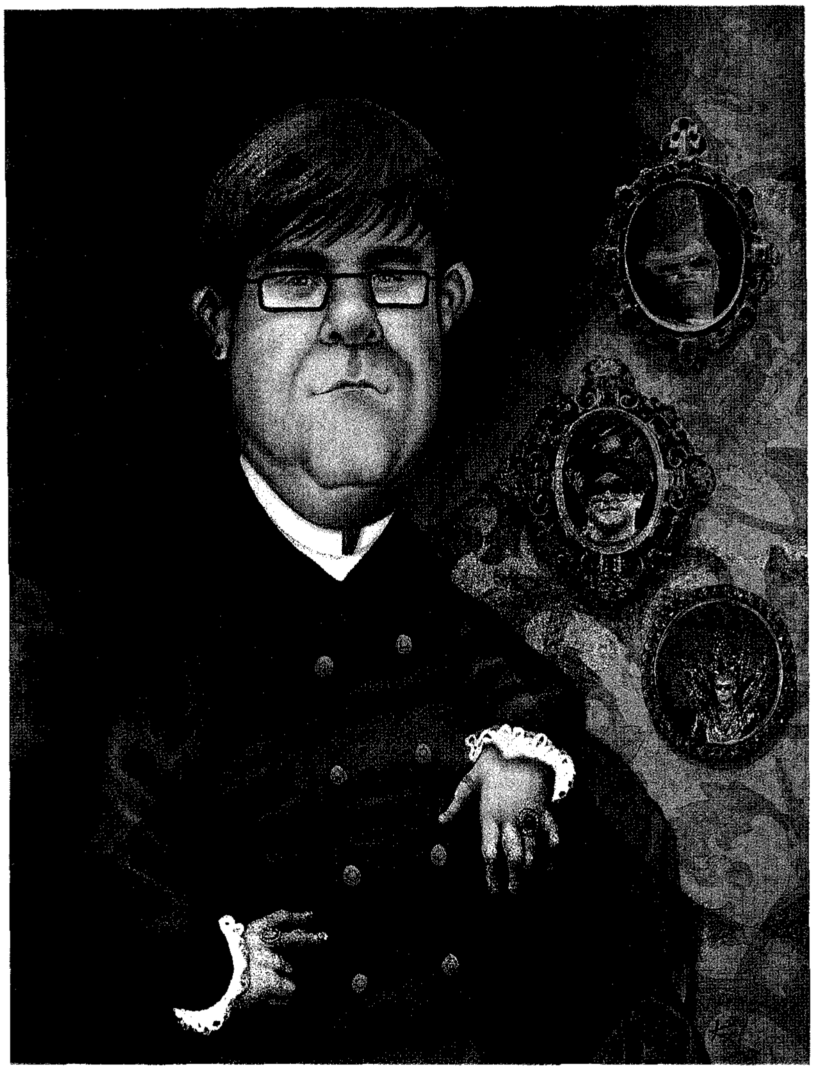
BY IAN PARKER

LIKE his hair and his personality, Elton John's English country mansion has been refashioned in recent years. The room that was once a discothèque—mirrored ball, amyl nitrite, Village People—now has chintz sofas and deep carpets. The squash court has become a library. The games room has been cleared of rock-and-roll pinball machines and stuffed animals. The outdoor five-a-side football pitch (trimmed with Watford Football Club logos) has been dug up, and in its place is a formal Italian garden, designed by Sir Roy Strong, the former director of London's Victoria and Albert Museum; in it are hedges and little paths, and a twelve-foot obelisk that was mistakenly reported in the British tabloid press to be a thirty-foot statue of a penis, and also to be a possible distraction to air traffic at nearby Heathrow Airport.

No one would call this a house of restraint. Elton John, now forty-nine, does not binge, as he once did, on alcohol, cocaine, food, and spectacles. But he has found other ways of expressing what his former therapist described to me, not unreasonably, as a compulsive personality. Mick Jagger, visiting here recently, said, "I've never seen so much fucking porcelain. If I see one more piece of porcelain . . ." Porcelain is one of Elton's current obsessions, as are flowers (his florists have no other clients) and modern black-and-white photographs (kept in his apartment in Atlanta). He also collects the work of Arthur Devis, the eighteenth-century English portraitist, who did his society subjects the favor of attaching their heads to dazzlingly fashionable clothes they had never owned or worn; it seems right that Elton John, who once played to five hundred thousand people in Central Park while dressed as Donald Duck, eats his lunch under paintings of people not fully at ease with their waistcoats.

Throughout his twenty-seven-year career as a solo singer of melodic pop music (more than forty albums made, hundreds of millions of records sold, a fortune earned), Elton John has often spoken of fresh starts, both personal and professional. He has always enjoyed standing in the light of an alleged new dawn, putting one thing or another—touring, say, or perilously high platform shoes—behind him. Today, he can speak with more confidence than usual about having drawn a line through his past. In his personal life, he is able to celebrate exactly six years of abstinence from alcohol and drugs; his hair, too, has completed some kind of twelve-step program. And he is in a seemingly secure three-year-old relationship. Professionally, he has reason to be satisfied: his music will never again quite storm the world as it did in the first dizzy years of the seventies (when he had seven consecutive No. 1 albums in the United States), but he has pulled himself out of a (relative) eighties slump. He seems to matter. Millions around the world still want him to give their lives a lush, melancholic, American-accented soundtrack—an accompaniment to their seductions, partings, and long-distance car journeys. He is held in great reverence by his younger comrades in pop—George Michael, for instance, who as an adolescent bought every album as it was released. Last year, Elton won an Oscar for "Can You Feel the Love Tonight?"—his No. 1 single from "The Lion King"—and grossed twenty-two and a half million dollars on a forty-one-concert world tour (he played Madison Square Garden for the forty-fourth time), and this year he has already recorded a single with Luciano Pavarotti and dashed off a stage musical for Disney: "Aida" (as in "Aida"). A compilation, "Love Songs," is about to be released in the United States.

This is the refurbished Elton, who feels that he has turned off a path leading directly to late-period Elvis Presley: he has founded his own AIDS charity; he seeks to control a famously volatile temper; he hangs out with Mstislav Rostropovich. Certainly his place in the British establishment is still unusual, because he is known to have both danced to "Rock Around the Clock" with the Queen and recommended himself to young men in Studio 54 with talk of hard drugs. (The British tabloid press seems to find it painful not to know for sure if Elton is a national treasure or a raddled old queen.) But it is perhaps significant that an anonymous East End correspondent who was forever sending him photographs cut from the newspapers and embellished with "Wanker!" or "Why don't you sod off and get a proper job?" has for the moment stopped his abuse.



He gives Jon Bon Jovi advice about interior design: "I've become the Martha Stewart of the rock-and-roll generation."

ANITA KUNZ

A few Sundays ago, on what was the hottest day yet of the British summer, Elton John was sitting under his Devis portraits at the head of a long dining table where he has entertained, among other problem eaters, the Princess of Wales and Michael Jackson. The scent of cut flowers was intense. Ice water was served. The sound of fountains outside carried through open doors. The man with whom Elton John lives—David Furnish, a thirty-three-year-old Canadian-born writer and filmmaker—also sat at the table, and sometimes fed grapes to the dogs or offered a gentle insight into his lover's past or present habits (and was sometimes gently corrected: "I'm not a pop star—I hate that phrase 'pop star,'" Elton said).

Elton John was wearing a pastel Nike polo shirt and loose striped shorts. Like many people at his level of wealth and power, he has often seemed preoccupied by those aspects of his life which resist the impact of wealth and power—in Elton's case, weight gain and hair loss. Today, after a lifetime of crash dieting (and, more recently, bulimia), he is not fat, but he has something of Bart Simpson's body profile. His reddish-brown hair—much of it, strictly speaking, not his but a weave (he acknowledged this with a self-mocking look heavenward)—flopped over his forehead. He often put his hands to his fringe, as if about to flick it to one side or the other, but then stopped himself, like someone taking care not to scratch at an insect bite.

This slight awkwardness aside, Elton John seemed relaxed and cheery. As we ate lunch, he slipped in and out of playful high camp: "I don't know how Mrs. Jagger does it. Mick talks to *everybody* when she's got a new album out." He was articulate and sharp-witted. He laughed a lot—quite often at his own expense. As the hot breeze came in from his Italian garden, he remembered, from the bad old days, another breeze, blowing onto the balcony of an unimaginably expensive hotel suite in central London. Elton John remembered shouting at a member of his entourage, "Can't you do something about the fucking wind?" (The entourage member: "She's lost it, she's finally lost it.")

Elton John has other topics of conversation (he shows, for example, great enthusiasm for modern pop music: Beck, Portishead, Underworld), but when he talks about himself he does so with merry disrespect and candor. Indeed, during our conversation his candor sometimes seemed almost recklessly unrestrained, to the point where he seemed to be invading his own privacy, bringing up past indiscretions with near-bulimic vigor. He perhaps acquired the habit in the process of recovery (but you can imagine its becoming something from which one might eventually want to recover). Or perhaps he is rebelling against a career spent singing someone else's (Bernie Taupin's) lyrics—singing from someone else's heart. For whatever reason, self-exposure is now his thing—the only form of self-abuse he is allowed. "I fucking loved cocaine," he told me. "It opened me up. But in the end all I was doing with cocaine was sitting in my room, doing it on my own and watching pornographic videos for two weeks at a time, and being so paranoid that I was creeping about and not wanting anyone to hear me—and it was *my house*."

Elton John takes pleasure in the fact that he no longer needs to creep about. Last year, he allowed David Furnish to video his life for a documentary: there was no crew, just Furnish and a camera. At the time of our lunch, the strange and compelling result, "Elton John: Tantrums and Tiaras," had just been shown on British television (ahead of a planned sale to American television): Elton camping it up here and there; Elton backstage at

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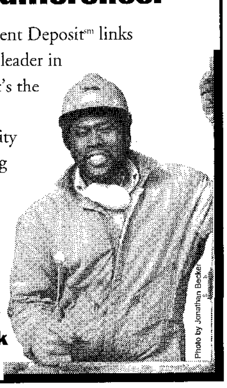

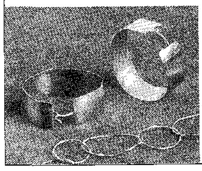

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the Oscars; Elton shopping for Versace shirts—this, this, this, this; and Elton on a video shoot in an amazing full-length leopard-skin coat, shouting, "I'll do everything my fucking self in the future!" When, in the South of France, his early-morning game of tennis is disturbed by a woman crying "Yoo-hoo!" Elton storms back into his hotel and telephones for a plane to pick him up, saying, "I'm *never* coming to the South of France again." A moment later, Elton gives his lover, and therefore the camera, a half smile, as if seeking permission to play out his game. (He did not fly home. "I'm all mouth and no trousers," he says now.)

In Britain, reactions to all this were mixed. "I thought it was the bravest thing Elton's ever done," says Beauchamp (Beechy) Colclough, his friend and former therapist. "I was gobsmacked. He said, 'Here I am. This is the way I am.' " By contrast, Max Clifford, Britain's master of celebrity public relations, and the man who brought O. J. Simpson to Britain, described it to me as "a very bad idea, because it painted him as someone who's incredibly rich, incredibly vain, and incredibly empty."

To its subject, the film is funny and true, even if he can see in himself something of Zaza from "La Cage aux Folles." Elton said, "I wanted to say, 'Listen, I'm not Cliff Richard.' This is how unbearable I can be, and sometimes how endearing I can be." Part of Elton wants to be thought real (he always relished the great realness, for example, of becoming chairman of the Watford Football Club, in 1976: drinking shoulder to shoulder with "ordinary people" in the Supporters' Club), but he also thinks that "a mystique is very important," and that "to remain successful you have to have that enigma around you." There seems to be some confusion here, yet in "Tantrums and Tiaras" there was only one point where Elton's openness failed him, when Furnish affectionately pressed him about his workload, asking, "Do you think you should take a rest?"

"I don't want to discuss it," Elton replied, with half-serious petulance.

Furnish then asked, "Are you worried about not having enough balance in your life? What is balance for you?"

The answer was "I don't know. Spending enough time with you, probably. I don't know." Elton then looked into the camera and said "Shush" softly.

David Furnish—whose film is inevitably also a kind of self-portrait, a study of life lived in the wake of fame, in the afterglow of flashbulbs—was keen to let me know that the tantrums seen in the program were "really the worst two in the course of a whole year." There was a pause after he said this, and Elton John said, "No, they weren't—there was the one at the Albert Hall." Furnish, now remembering, said, "And there was the one in Brazil . . ."

JOHN REID, who is Elton John's manager, and was for a long while his lover, remembers when they first met, in 1970: Elton came into his office, shyly handed him a record, then went away. Reid played it later: "It's a little bit funny, this feeling inside . . ." Reid remembers thinking, "*This*? *Him*? I couldn't put the two together. He was thin, he was good-looking—I always thought he was good-looking—he was funny, but he was shy, and this music was so beautiful and strong. There was nothing apologetic about it, it was confident—a lot of things that were the opposite of what he seemed to be."

Elton John (né Reginald Dwight) was an awkward, fastidious, list-keeping young man from a North London suburb—an only child. His father, who divorced his mother when Elton was in his mid-teens, was in the R.A.F., and so was often away, and Elton never forgave what he considered his failings as a parent. Elton John's mother, to whom he is still very close, recently told her son, "I don't think he liked you very much." He complained if Elton ate celery too loudly, and forbade him to wear Hush Puppies.

Elton was a talented child pianist, later a Saturday-night pub pianist; later, he played in an R. & B. group called Bluesology. In 1967, he was introduced to a young, unknown lyricist, Bernie Taupin, and together they wrote the songs with which Elton launched a solo career. ("What I do best is write melodies to other people's lyrics," Elton says. "I think I'm a good—a great—melody writer. I wish I could write my own lyrics, but I can't.") Elton first found fame in America in 1970. "Nobody was doing piano, bass, and drums at that point," he says. "And nobody was doing things on the piano, apart from Leon Russell." Elton's concerts in a Los Angeles club in

1970 were praised to the skies in the press, and a vast American market was soon discovered for this curious new act—effortless melodic songs presented with Jerry Lee Lewis gusto by a man in big boots who accepted that he was "not your actual sex symbol."

Elton lost his shyness onstage. Having pretty much skipped the Hush Puppies stage, he went directly to the hot-pants-and-fur-coat stage. (Later came Eiffel Tower hats, angel wings, and Mozart wigs. Elton John once asked his friend Bryan Forbes, "How do I acquire taste?") "Even though I took my music very seriously, I had to be tongue in cheek," he says. "I was stuck at a seven-foot piano, and there was nothing I could do with it. I was trying to do a Jimi Hendrix with it—I was leaping on it, I was kicking it, I was shoving it—and I don't think people had seen that for a long time."

He was, in part, an ironic pop star, banishing shyness by dressing in outfits and lyrics that never quite looked to be his own. This prevented things from becoming too urgent or too dark—too Neil Young—and it provided him with an air of lovable vulnerability, but it was sometimes hard for Bernie Taupin (who today lives in Santa Ynez, California, and answers his telephone from a horse). "Sometimes," Taupin says, with good humor, "I thought it was detrimental to the content of the song if you're singing about attempted suicide while jumping up and down on the piano with three-foot boots on and mauve feathers sticking out of your head."

In an unusual arrangement, Taupin and Elton John never wrote in the same room: Taupin provided John with sheaves of finished lyrics, and John made songs of them as he could. They still use this method. Taupin does not make specific melodic suggestions, although he does now work with a guitar. "I play chords, and almost sing the lyrics in my head, and then it gives me a sense of form, of construction," he says. "I feel it makes for a better lyric. Some people may say, 'I liked it in the old days—it was a bit more free form, and it probably pushed Elton a little harder.' But everything changes."

Elton John (who does not particularly relish discussion of work, and, unusual for a show-business interviewee, would rather get back to the sex and drugs) says, "I get a lyric from Mr. Taupin, and I look at it, and decide if it is going to be a fast song, a slow song, or a medium-paced song, and then I sit at a keyboard, sometimes with a drum machine, and write a melody."

He does this at extraordinary speed. If he has made no progress within fifteen minutes, he will abandon the melody. A finished song might take an hour or so, and it is likely to be a very good song. This amazes David Furnish. He calls the process genius—"It does my head in." This still amazes Bernie Taupin, too. When he and Elton are writing music for an album, and Elton is banging out melody after melody after melody, Taupin sometimes loses faith in a song for a moment, forgetting where he is. "Sometimes," he says, "I won't be impressed straightaway—I'll think, You should have taken a bit more time on that, because it sounds a bit flat and repetitive. And then I'll hear it again, and I'll pick up on all these little nuances in the songs, and, really, that's where his genius lies. He's got these hooks and turns. Instead of taking the path of least resistance—letting the melody line resolve in the obvious way—he goes against the grain. He'll do something melodically that you won't expect." John Reid, who lived with Elton John for five years, and was the first man Elton slept with, remembers being woken up by Elton in the middle of the night and being played "Candle in the Wind," written from scratch in half an hour.

The albums of those early years—"Elton John" (which included "Your Song"), "Honky Château" ("Rocket Man"), "Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only the Piano Player" ("Daniel," "Crocodile Rock"), "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" ("Candle in the Wind," "Bennie and the Jets")—established Elton John as the biggest act in America, the most successful solo artist since Elvis. He became friends with Marc Bolan, John Lennon, and Rod Stewart. He had dinner with Princess Margaret. He bought many things, and made lists of the many things he bought.

"The first five years of my career, I just loved every fucking minute of it," Elton John says. "I was making two albums a year, touring, I was totally involved, and loved it. I was having a ball. And I think

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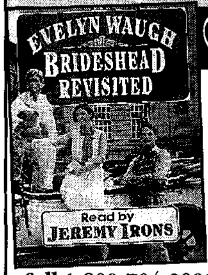
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I got so tired. When 'Blue Moves' came out"—in 1976—"I knew, instinctively, I'd had my four or five years of being a big cheese, and I'd have to find my feet."

Elton took me for a walk in his thirty-seven-acre garden. ("The Queen Mother says I've got the best view of Windsor Castle in Berkshire," he told me.) By the tennis court, in the middle of a lawn, there was a tram. Elton explained that it had been shipped from Melbourne at some cost and inconvenience. "That," he said, "was in the cocaine days. 'Get me a tram,' she said."

Those "Spinal Tap" days: in the years that followed "Blue Moves," there were any number of sold-out stadium performances, and gold and platinum disks (he has shimmering corridors of them at home, floor to ceiling for mile after mile), but complacency crept in along with tiredness. (He could see it in himself: "When I saw the Sex Pistols slagging me off on television, I thought, Yes you *are* a lazy fat cunt.") He began to drink and take cocaine on a grand scale. In Bernie Taupin's phrase, Elton could be "Santa Claus one minute, the Devil incarnate the next." On a video shoot in the South of France, for "I'm Still Standing" (1983)—a song that later acquired recovery resonance—Elton guzzled eight vodka Martinis in thirty minutes. He woke to find a trashed room, and was told that, following an argument—"something to do with a boyfriend"—he had "got hold of John Reid, sat on top of him, and punched and punched and punched him," until his nose was broken.

"Cocaine was a social thing at first," Elton says. "And it was a great sexual thing for me, too. I found it sexually stimulating." He relished cocaine's "complete dissolving of inhibitions, the fantasy of it." (In 1976, he had told *Rolling Stone* he was bisexual—a statement that, although not true, was brave. Earlier that year, he had become chairman of Watford, and fans of opposing teams were then duty-bound to sing rhyming obscenities about his imagined sexual practices.) He told his biographer, Philip Norman, that he "took hostages" rather than formed relationships. He said to me, "I used to see someone in a bar, and already plan the relationship—I had *never met them*. I'd see someone and think, Oh"—sigh—"you're fabulous. I'd already be living with them." His likely line on making an approach would be "Would you like to come back to the house and have some drugs?" He recalls, "The trouble is, if you want to pick up a busboy you have to wait until the fucking club closes. And by the time you get home you're like that"—he mimes cocaine-inspired rigor mortis. Elton John has tested negative for H.I.V.: he says he was fortunate in his sexual tastes, which inclined toward voyeurism.

NOW I HEAR IT

This weird music we played all the time:
straight statements, country, using the name of the Lord,
a horse, men and women to complain and praise.

I barely remember the sound in the little car,
or how the air blew through between us. Incomprehension
hardly leaves room enough for a true memory.

Accurate sight of the songs out the small window?
What was the Bearswamp Bar, the half night halfway
lost in the woods in the car, but hearing this music.

And what was the week at the beach
later? Drawn back, single-mindedly reading
selfish young Emma, pride and prejudice, and persuasion.

Walking away from the group at the house,
a kitchen of brothers, sisters and large pans,
corn, clams, the colors of lobsters,

all for walks on a dusty side-country road,
inhaling. Trying to think. Bordered by—what?—like
bridalwreath, anarchic bay flowers, wild-rose carnations.

—Elizabeth Macklin

In 1984, to the amazement of many, Elton John married Renate Blauel, a German-born sound engineer. "It was basically dishonest," he says now. "I was so unhappy, I thought that any sort of change . . . When you take a lot of drugs, and you're out to lunch half the time, you think a change of scenery . . . I'll get another house, I'll move to another country." The couple were separated in 1988. The same year, Elton won a record million pounds in an out-of-court libel settlement with the *Sun* for stories that alleged implication in a "shocking drugs and vice scandal." Elton said at the time, "They can say I'm a fat old cunt, they can say I'm an untalented bastard, they can call me a poof, but they mustn't tell lies about me."

At the end of the eighties, with the encouragement of his then boyfriend, Elton began to seek help for his various addictions. (At an initial therapy session, he and his lover were asked to list each other's failings. His boyfriend talked of Elton's problems with alcohol and cocaine, while Elton John began, "Hugh never puts his CDs away tidily.") In 1990, Elton checked in to the Parkside Lutheran Hospital, in Chicago, where he had to share a room, do his own laundry ("I had *no idea* how to work a washing machine"), and write a farewell letter to cocaine. Six weeks—and only one major tantrum—later, the regime had done its work. "I now think I know myself pretty well," Elton says. "I know what I can and can't do. I would like to have a drink, and I'd love to have the ability to have one line of coke—and have a great time—or one Ecstasy, but I can't do it." In the first years of the nineties, he attended a total of fifteen hundred meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and others—he kept a list—but he stopped three years ago, when he saw a new addiction looming. He met David Furnish—then in advertising—while he was making a concerted effort to break out of his A.A. circle. He told a friend, "You know, I'd like to meet some gay people"—he had company, rather than romance, in mind—and the friend asked a few friends if they'd like to go up to his house. Furnish went out of curiosity, half expecting to find a glittery freak in a private rock-and-roll hall of fame.

Elton John: "You expected me to stand there in a glittery costume and a pair of high-heeled shoes?"

Furnish: "I expected you to be glittery."

In the mock-Augustan dining room of Elton John's redecorated house, the lunch plates were cleared away by a housekeeper. Dogs ran here and there. Elton sang a line from a song by Beck: "I'm a loser, baby, so why don't you kill me?" David Furnish described an exhibition he is helping to curate as part of the first Florence Biennale, opening in September. "I'm putting together a retrospective of Elton's eyeglasses and stage costumes in a space at the Uffizi," he said. Furnish has a collection of three thousand spectacles from which to choose: these survived a purge of Elton artifacts auctioned in 1989.

At my request, Elton put on a rough recording of "Aida," the musical he has written, with Tim Rice. ("Aida"—a working title—is one of several Disney stage musicals currently in development; another is "The Lion King." These will eventually follow "Beauty and the Beast" to Broadway.) From his place at the head of the table, Elton turned up the volume by remote control, and we spent some time in the peculiar golden medium of future hit songs. Staying in his seat, Elton John did something that millions have done but not all would admit to: he sang along quite loudly to Elton John. He closed his eyes slightly, put his head to one side, and lost his former air of smiling self-mockery. David Furnish sang along, too, but with less abandon.

Elton told me that he had written and recorded "Aida" in nineteen days—a song a day. I asked him, "Could we call that, say, a million dollars a day?" He said, "Probably," rather sheepishly, and tried not to smile. He can't figure out what other songwriters do with their time. "I mean, Lionel Richie was making that album"—"Louder Than Words"—"for eight years. Eight years! Fucking hell. I said to him, 'Lionel, what do you do every day? You don't play golf. What do you *do*?' "

Elton John doesn't play golf, because he is no good at it. He plays a lot of tennis. He gives Jon Bon Jovi advice about interior design. ("I've become the Martha Stewart of the rock-and-roll generation," he says.) He eats in the Bibendum restaurant, in South Kensington, and goes to the cinema in the afternoons, perhaps in Chelsea. He shops. He writes music, always up against his deadline. (He told me he had just written an additional song for the stage version of "The Lion King": "I call it 'The Hyena Slobber Song.' It's come to this.") He no longer goes to night clubs, but he does go out at night. Two days after our Sunday lunch, I met him at the première of "Lord of the Dance," a show based on Irish dancing, whose star is also managed by John Reid. It was a sweltering, stormy night. During the intermission, Elton found a quiet corner, where he was drinking water out of a champagne glass and was surrounded by friends from Atlanta—mostly tanned youngish men in beautifully pressed shirts. Disappointed by the air-conditioning, they were cooling one another with tiny handheld electric fans, and Elton was losing some private battle to be diplomatic about the production. "I'm calling it 'Hitler Was Irish,' " he said. Then, looking around, he added, with irony, "*All* the big stars are here!"

At the party afterward, in a grand high room in the Savoy Hotel, he told me, "Audiences have always been very kind to me—very generous and very warm—and I never knew how to respond to that. I was always embarrassed by it, I didn't know how to accept praise." In common with his other life rethinkings, he is paying attention to this, and making progress. He said he remembered the Donald Duck outfit he wore at the free Central Park concert in 1980: a huge, complicated thing with a bill and a protruding tail—all mouth and no trousers. Despite all the help given him by Bob Halley, his long-serving assistant, he couldn't get into the costume, and he became convinced that the audience would leave before he was ready: "I put my legs in the armholes and arms in the legholes, and I'm saying to Bob, 'They're *going to go*.' He's saying, 'There are five hundred thousand people out there, dear. They're not going to go. Get in.' " ♦

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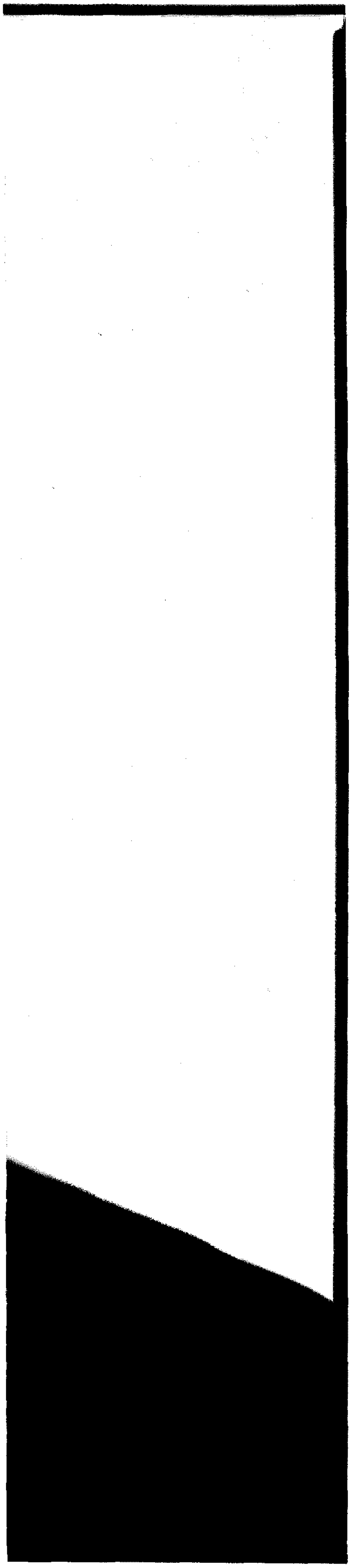


PERFORMANCE

QUESTIONS OF GENIUS

What has made Evgeny Kissin the most phenomenal prodigy of our time?

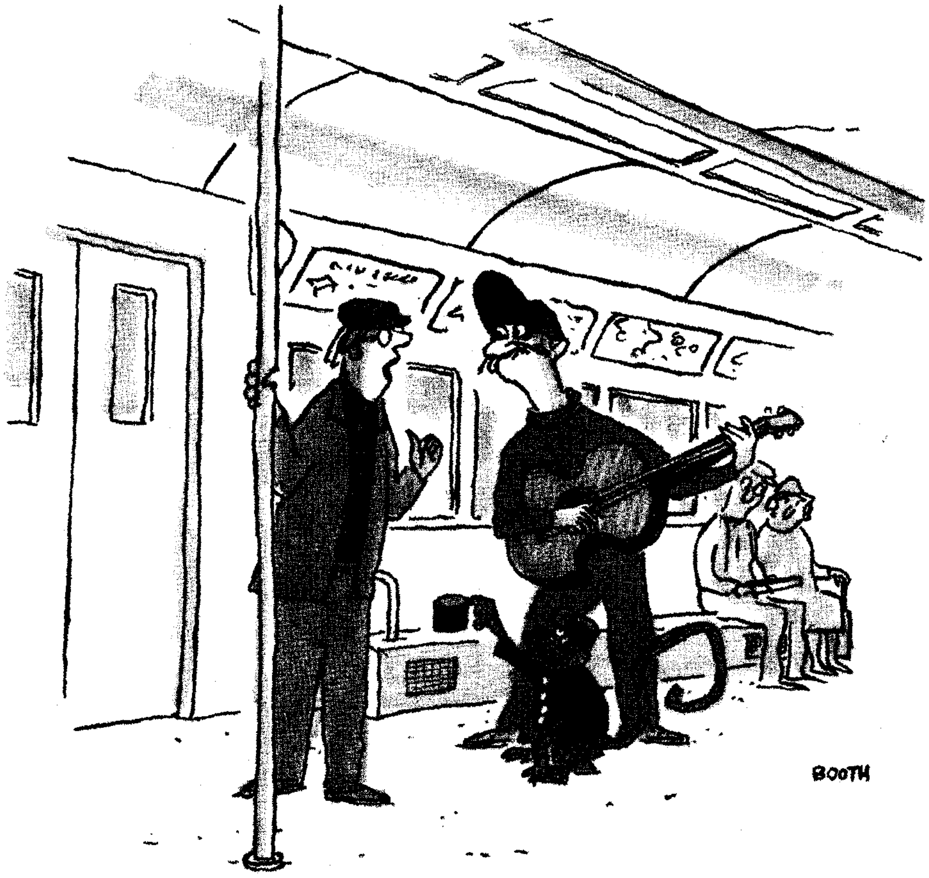
BY ANDREW SOLOMON

AT first, when Evgeny Kissin was a small child, his mother did not want him to become a musician. "I had seen how difficult that life was, and I didn't like the education that was given to children training for big careers," she says. "They struggle so hard in those special schools—they lose their childhood. I was afraid for this little son of mine."

Anna Pavlovna Kantor, a renowned piano teacher at the prestigious Gnessen Music School for Gifted Children, in Moscow, was astonished when she met the prodigy. "This mother—she had been pressured by a friend to see me—came with her little boy, with curls all over his head like an angel," she recalls. "He opened his bottomless eyes, and I saw a light in him. I took him by the hand and led him inside. I was amazed by this boy—not just by his ears, for many gifted children have such fine hearing, but by the way he used them. When he came to Liszt's Twelfth Rhapsody, he played the octaves, which his tiny hands

Kissin photographed by Brigitte Lacombe and performing at Carnegie Hall in 1993.

ABOVE: STEVE J. SHERMAN



"I gave on the E train."

• •

couldn't reach, with both hands. And he had such imagination, such a sense of fantasy! I asked him to translate a story into music. I said that we were coming into a dark forest, full of wild animals, very scary, and then step by step the sun rises, and the birds start singing. And he began in the lower register of the piano, in a dark and dangerous place, and then, lighter and lighter, the birds awakening, the first rays of the sun, and finally a delightful, almost ecstatic melody.

"I didn't want to teach him. I was afraid, because I knew I would have to teach all the basic things, the notes, how to count the pauses. I thought he would be bored, that he would lose this freshness and interest. Such imagination can be very fragile. But his mother said to me, 'Clever and faithful helper, don't worry. He is interested in whatever is new to him. Try.' And so it began, and ever since then we have been together."

Anna Kantor is still an indispensable adviser to the musical wunderkind of our time, clever and faithful helper to a career that has grown beyond all her early expectations. At the age of twenty-four, Evgeny Kissin has more than two dozen CDs in circulation, many of them best-sellers; his concerts in the world's major halls—whether in New York, Tokyo, Milan, or Buenos Aires—are generally sold out months before they take place. Kissin has kept alive a tradition of larger-than-life virtuoso piano performance that seemed to end with the deaths of Arthur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, and, last year, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. (The last living titan of this older generation is the eighty-one-year-old Sviatoslav Richter.) Kissin's performances are not intellectually conceived interpretations, like those of most modern performers, but magnificent scenes of inspiration that materialize before the audience's very eyes. The forms of genius remain strange to us, and musical genius, which can blossom so suddenly in childhood, is the most mysterious of them all. Kant, in his seminal definition of genius, said, "If an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it; nor is it in his power to devise such products at his pleasure, or by following a plan, or to communicate [his procedure] to others in precepts that would enable them to bring about like products." Watching Kissin perform, one sees a man who seems, literally, possessed by his music.

Though Kissin can speak of music with intellectual clarity, he can no more verbalize how he has arrived at his way of playing the piano than the leopard can explain how he got his spots. "How do you choose your encores?" I asked him when we first met, in London in the early spring, the day after a recital. "They come to me," he said. "How do you judge an audience?" "I feel something in the air." "How do you decide when you are ready for a piece?" "This is always very clear to me." "How do you decide which concerts to attend?" "I attend the ones I'm interested in." It must have been like this to interview the early saints.

Evgeny Kissin is too tall and too thin, with an unusually large head and a mop of crazy-genius Einstein hair. It's the sort of hair in which you could mislay something, and it's his defining physical attribute. He has enormous brown eyes and pale skin, and the overall effect is somehow exaggerated, awkwardly out of proportion, gangly. His bearing is shy and serious, but when inspiration is upon him he seems to fill out his own proportions, taking on a celestial air that can be affecting and, at moments, strangely beautiful. He had been described to me as a "moon child"—peculiar, incomprehensible, closed, impenetrable—and at our first encounter I felt that we were speaking through an unchinked wall. When we started discussing this article, I told him that I would like to plan at least three or four meetings. He replied, sounding genuinely bewildered, "But what on earth will we talk about?"

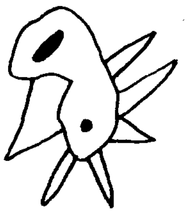
EVGENY IGOREVICH KISSIN was born in Moscow on October 10, 1971. His mother, Emilia, taught piano to local children; his father, Igor, was a hardworking engineer; his sister, Alla, ten years older than he, was learning piano, and would become an accomplished accompanist. In a cramped apartment, they lived the life of the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia: physically uncomfortable and continually frustrating, with only the pleasures of the mind to make up for ordinary discomforts of the flesh and ideology's intrusions on the spirit. They were a lively but not an obviously remarkable family. The understanding was that the girl would play the piano, like her mother, and the boy would be an engineer, like his father. Little Genya demonstrated remarkable gifts very early, however, and they were not engineering gifts. At eleven months, he sang an entire Bach fugue that his sister had been practicing. He soon began to sing everything he heard: whatever his sister was studying, whatever his mother's pupils were learning, whatever came on the radio. "From that moment on," his mother recalls, "music never left our house. He would start singing immediately after opening his eyes in the morning, and he would sing all day long. It was rather embarrassing to take him out in the streets in Moscow. He would sing all the time, with his very clear baby voice, and people would stop and stare. Sometimes little crowds would gather. At the beginning, it was amusing, but as it went on it became quite eerie. It was relentless, non-stop, and I became frightened by it."

When he was two years and two months old, Genya sat down at the old Bechstein on which his mother taught and picked out with one finger some of the tunes he had been singing. The next day, he did the same again, and on the third day he played with both hands, using all his fingers. As the year progressed, he became more purposeful. He would listen to LPs, and immediately play back a remarkable approximation of the music he'd heard. His mother says, "Chopin's ballades he would play with those little hands, as well as Beethoven sonatas and Liszt rhapsodies. And also songs, children's songs and adult ones, and he would try to play symphonies." That winter, he went to a party for a little girl who was turning two. Frightened by strangers, he stepped back and hid his face in his mother's skirt. But when she whispered, "Genya, there is a piano over there," he marched directly over to the instrument, and entertained the other children all evening.

At three, Kissin began improvising original music. "Unfortunately, no one wrote it down, and those pieces disappeared immediately," he told me. "I especially liked to portray in music the people I knew. I would make the rest of the family guess who it was. As a rule, their answers were right. I don't know how, but I could grasp any form, and I wrote sonatas, rondos, mazurkas—whatever might occur to me." By the age of six, Kissin had been taken on by Anna Pavlovna Kantor.

What most gifted students might take five lessons to learn, the young Kissin learned in one. He read music quickly, and was soon sight-reading everything put in front of him. Virtually anything he played once he had by heart, although he never made, he says, a conscious effort to memorize anything. Anna Pavlovna was very protective of him. "Her greatest triumph is that she preserved his gift," Genya's mother explains. "I am a teacher myself, and understand this. I will be grateful to Anna Pavlovna all my life for what she did. She understood how to supplement what was there, never replace it. And I, as a mother, tried my best to leave him alone, not to interfere in this development."

As he grew older, Kissin stopped improvising at the keyboard and began to compose. He was often ill—he had pneumonia every winter of his childhood—and when he stayed in bed he would write music all day. All his pieces are inscribed, "Dedicated to my dear teacher, Anna Pavlovna." Kissin never studied composition: "I was afraid that in studying it and doing exercises his inspiration might be destroyed," Anna Pavlovna says. A few years later, he gave up composing. "I had run the gamut of styles, from Baroque to Classical to Romantic," he says, "and then I had nothing more to say. I was increasingly involved in concert performance, and I turned my creative energies there."



From the beginning, the piano was his emancipation. "In my first school years, when I returned from school I would, without taking my coat off, go to the piano and play for a while," he says. "I made my mother understand that this was just what I needed." His earliest public performances, before teachers and classmates, often included his own compositions. He played his first solo recital in May, 1983, at the age of eleven. "I had such a feeling of relief," he recalls. "During intermission, I was impatient to return to the stage. My teacher had said that there is good nervousness and bad nervousness. If you are not prepared, that's bad nervousness. But I think I felt only excitement and pleasure."

After the concert, a friend of Anna Pavlovna's, the wife of the director of the House of Composers, congratulated teacher and pupil. "You play so beautifully," she said. "I will talk to my husband and we will invite you to perform at the House of Composers." This was a great honor, a gateway to fame and comfort in the Soviet period of deprivations. Anna Pavlovna, however, was uneasy. "You know," she replied, "he is still very young. He shouldn't play too much, shouldn't go through the stress of being overexposed." Suddenly, a stranger who was standing nearby interrupted them. "Excuse me," he said, "but I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. I am a doctor, and I have just had the pleasure of attending this concert. I heard you say that it's not good for him to play in public too often, and, of course, in a way that is true. But when, a few minutes ago, I saw in what a state of enthusiasm the boy returned to the stage for his encores I realized that it would be even more dangerous for him to get overburned inside. He needs to perform." He turned to Anna Pavlovna and said, "Madam, you love him, one can easily see it, so you must find the right balance, not to push him, but not to let him consume himself."

KISSIN was brought up in the Russian pianistic tradition rooted in the grand style of the nineteenth-century composer and legendary pianist Anton Rubinstein. Josef Hofmann, who studied with Rubinstein, has said of him, "All that he did was done instinctively, which, of course, is far superior to proceeding by rule or instruction because it is vital." The emphasis in Rubinstein's volcanic playing was on freedom of imagination and of feeling, with a reaching for massive effects at the possible expense of precision. (Kissin himself is a virtually note-perfect performer.) Kissin is the latest in a line of Russian "supermen" of the keyboard—a line that includes Sergei Rachmaninoff, Josef Lhévinne, Vladimir Horowitz, Emil Gilels, Sviatoslav Richter, and Lazar Berman, and whose distinguishing characteristic is a belief that the imagination and spirit of the performer should be equal to that of the composer.

Kissin's début at the House of Composers, on June 23, 1983, was astonishing. The eminent pianist Dmitry Bashkirov was there, and he at once understood that this was an exceptional talent. Bashkirov arranged for Kissin to perform with the Leningrad Philharmonic in November. Two months later, in January, the conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim visited Moscow, and Bashkirov invited the prodigy to play for him. Barenboim carried to the West the news of an astonishing boy in Moscow, and the legend of Evgeny Kissin began.

On March 27, 1984, Kissin, age twelve, appeared in Moscow with the Moscow Philharmonic under Dmitri Kitaenko and played Chopin's Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2. Everyone in the Russian music world was there. Photos from that occasion show a very small boy with a sweet smile and a mass of curls; he is dressed in the outfit of a Young Pioneer, with a red handkerchief tied around his neck and held in place with a badge of Lenin. Musical performance enjoyed a special status among the arts in the Soviet Union, because its abstract nature kept it from being ideologically suspect. The Kremlin, in the post-Stalinist era, was vastly proud of Soviet musicians—who served much the same political function as athletic stars, ballerinas, and cosmonauts—and the Soviet pianistic hothouse of the sixties, seventies, and early eighties was for Olympian victory. Anna Pavlovna kept Kissin away from competitions at which most performers proved themselves with powerhouse ostentatiousness. A recording of the 1984 concert was released in the U.S.S.R. almost immediately, and is still in print in the West. It feels innocent, unstudied, and exquisitely cheerful. Some of the concertos' monumentality is missing, but the playing is astonishingly articulate and beautiful in tone, and it fits Leonard Bernstein's characterization of true artistry—"fresh but inevitable."

As Kissin began to tour and continued to suffer bouts of pneumonia, he had an increasingly irregular schedule at

DIARY BY LOU REED

THE ACHES AND PAINS OF TOURING

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10TH

We played a five-hundred-year-old castle near Linz, Austria. The audience here is the same as the audience in Budapest—or Udine, for that matter. People have mastered the jutting neck and sliding head-and-shoulder movements associated with rock—moves that I can't do as my back has gone out.

From Linz to Rome and onward to Beret, Spain, which lies northwest of Barcelona—five and a half hours by car. We are going to fly from Rome to Barcelona and then helicopter to Beret. I ran into David Bowie earlier in Athens, where we were both doing a show. He's playing Spain, too, but is driving as he is apprehensive about the helicopter. I'm trying to think of it along the lines of the Cyclone at Coney Island rather than a Bill Graham killer. It only takes an hour.

FRIDAY, JULY 12TH • We landed on a small grassy hill in front of the hotel, the great techno-rhythm of the cutters pulsating above us. I met David in the lobby. He was watching us from his window to see if we crashed, I suppose. He's been out for almost a year now, while our tour is only heading into its sixth month.

David wears these great costumes. I wish I could, but I always end up in black T-shirts and stretch jeans from Trash and Vaudeville, on St. Marks Place. His wife, Iman, was there, looking very beautiful in a sheer white dress. It made me miss Laurie all the more. I wanted her to see these mountains, but she's in 106-degree Phoenix, in a motel overlooking a parking lot, preparing for her own show. I hope this beautiful hotel has a phone jack that can get me on-line.

SATURDAY, JULY 13TH • After the show, I met up with Iggy Pop—he's also playing. How does he stay in such great shape? I was doing crunches every day, but that's how I threw my back out. I would throw that StairMaster out the window if it would fit and someone else would lift it.

I tried a massage at the hotel, but all the guy did was poke and baste me like a chicken. Don't eat at places called Mama's, and don't get massages at resort hotels.

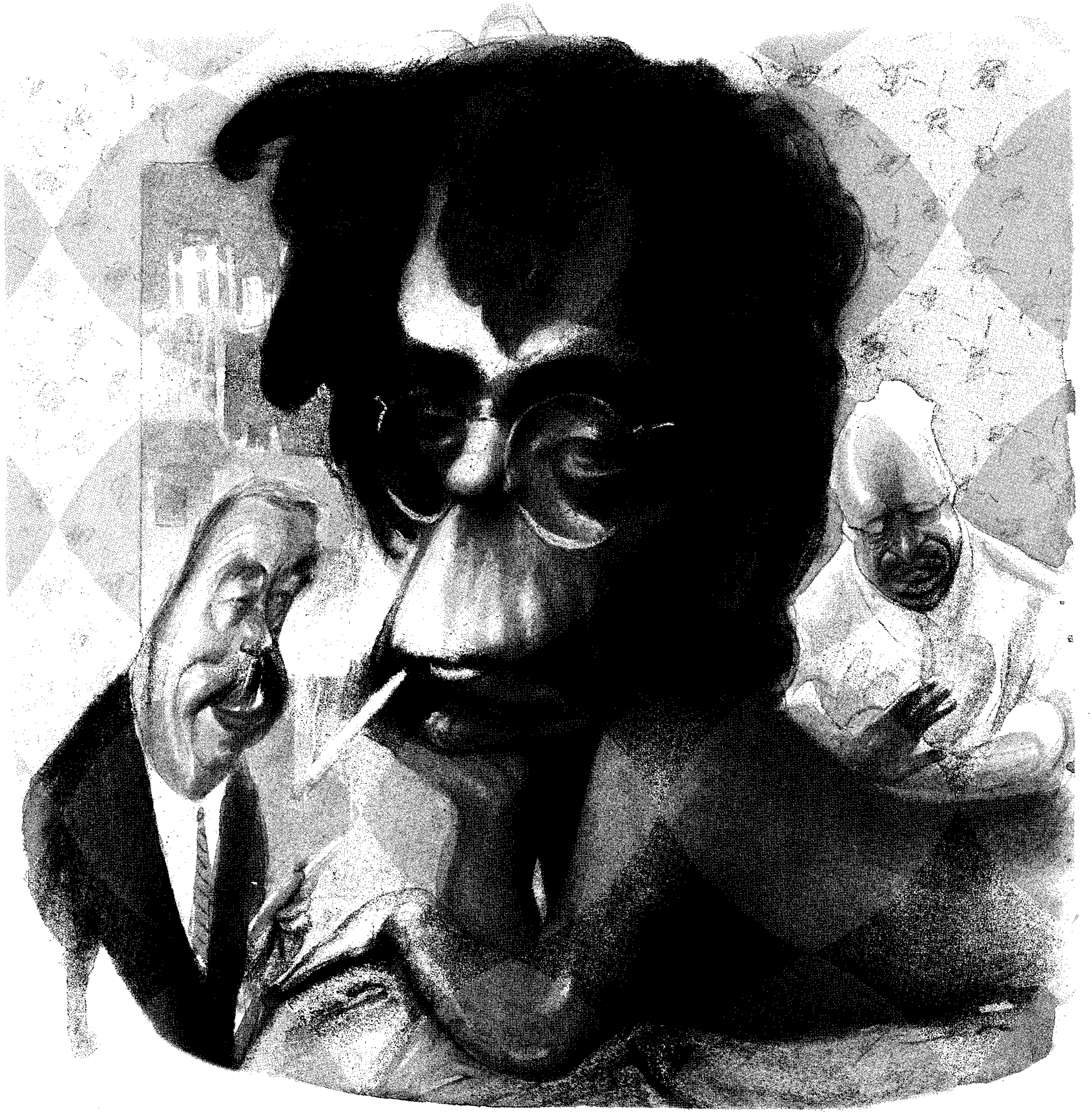
It's amazing, but the rooms I get on the road are always so much bigger than my apartment in New York. I really have to get a place outside the city. Bad timing levelled me—I bought and sold at the wrong time—but . . . maybe next year. I still rent, which is pretty much how I started out. And I'm sleeping on the floor (my back), which is also pretty much how I started. Only this time I'm looking out the window at the Pyrenees.

SUNDAY, JULY 14TH • We're doing a show in Antibes, but we're staying in Cannes. Bastille Day. We have so many people in the hotel that I got a special rate on a truly palatial room. A balcony looking out on the bay, yachts strewn with little lights lining up to watch the fireworks. I couldn't go out because my back was hurting again, but it was pretty good from the room: exploding trees and helix signs, dancing quarter moons, and tail-waggling dragons. All this to the music of "Gone with the Wind" and "West Side Story."

TUESDAY, JULY 16TH • Made it to Prague in one piece. These double flights are killers. Coming in from the airport, I saw how much building and expansion is going on. And now they have graffiti, which I hadn't noticed before. I hope I get to see Václav Havel. When I was here last time, his wife had died and he was in mourning.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17TH • We received a tour of the castle, with its tapestries and basketball-court-size meeting rooms. On the Presidential desk, there was a small box with the logo of a well-known rock group—a large red tongue. When they met the President, they'd all gone out on a balcony overlooking the square to say hello to the people. The door behind them locked and they had to crawl back in through an open window.

Havel looked exactly the same as before: open, friendly, inquisitive—the type of man you like, and soon love, on sight. He was chain-smoking and had a bad cough from the flu. We talked about the problems of writing. His: all he writes are speeches. Mine: I can't type when my back hurts, and I have a show to do in fif-



STEVE BRODNER

teen minutes. Havel says I could try a bottle of whiskey, or perhaps I might be able to see the trainer for the Czech Olympic swim team tomorrow. I hope he likes the show and stays afterward. But chances are he won't, because of security. We're playing in the old Communist congress; the sound is terrible, but people like having rock performed in this former hall of terror.

Backstage again, sweating and doing stretches. Have to pack later tonight. Havel decides to stay and is in one of the other rooms. I dry off and bound down the hall. We drink and smoke, and he says he liked the show. I'm relieved—I don't know why. I know we were good. It's just that we weren't as great as we can be. Actually not we, me. I wanted to be incandescent.

THURSDAY, JULY 18TH A.M. • Shampoo exploded in my suitcase and my freeze-dried breakfast mineral powder leaked across everything. I tried a wet cloth to clean it up, but then the shampoo started bubbling. Now one side of the suitcase has separated because the glue is being loosened by the shampoo. I showered, and when I went to dry my hair the hair dryer spewed green powder all over me, destroying a custom contact lens in the process. As I was cursing this luck, there was a knock on the door—the Olympic swimming trainer. Fifteen minutes and some extraordinary cracks later, I was back on my feet.

SATURDAY, JULY 20TH • Travelling from Prague to Vienna to Zeebrugge, Belgium. Two connecting flights and a one-hour layover. Travel time: six and a half hours. Playing time: one hour. My luggage is lost. An interviewer asks me why I don't smile much. I wonder if he'd ask Miles Davis that question. I tell him to check my inner glow. Some group has threatened to kill the Sex Pistols for cancelling a gig—security is high. What a way to go. Shot by a drunken fan mistaking you for Johnny Rotten. I love rock and roll. ♦

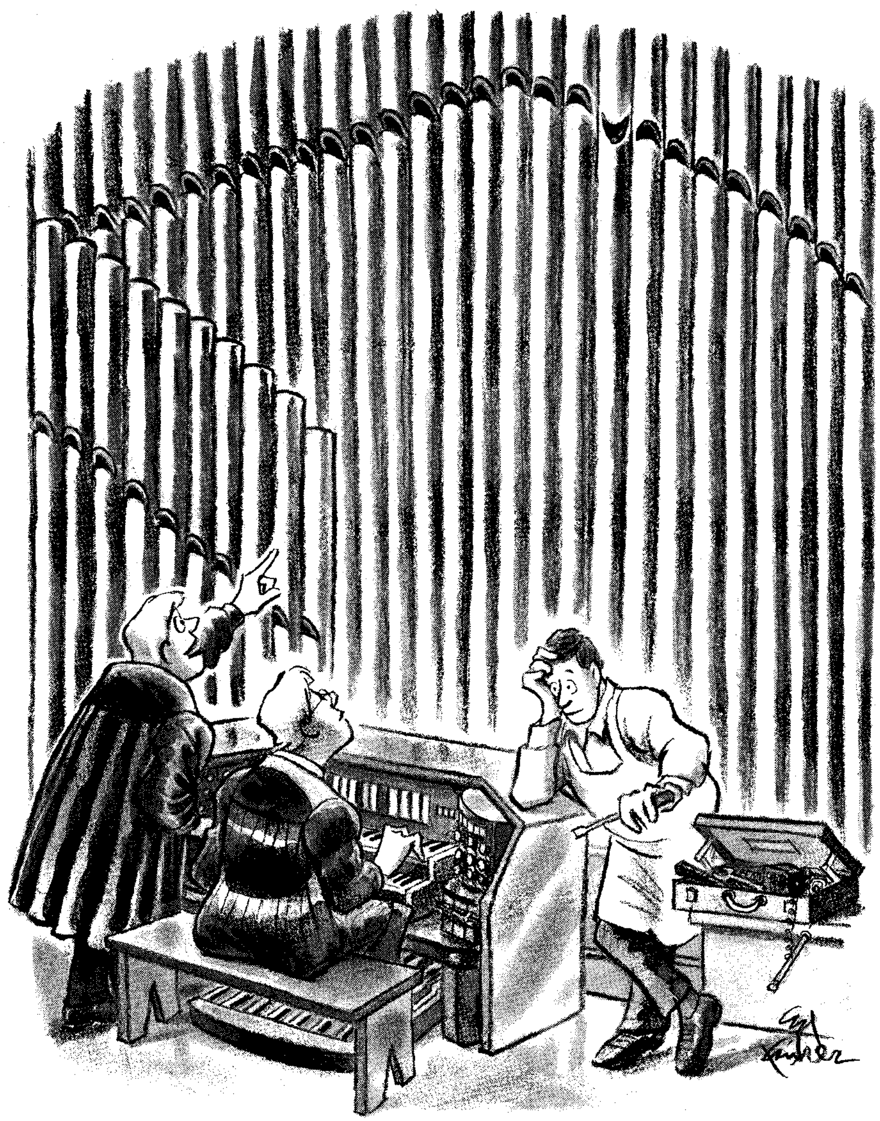
school. Anna Pavlovna negotiated with the authorities for a "free-attendance regimen," in which he received private tutoring ("The usual subjects," he says, "history, literature, mathematics, dialectical materialism, Leninism, military science, and so on") and spent little time in classrooms. He had never been especially connected to his peers and he had few friends his age: some were jealous, others were bewildered by him, and the escape from ordinary schooling came as a relief. Kissin and Anna Pavlovna had become inseparable, and when he was accepted at the Gnessen Institute the authorities gave her special permission to teach him there. He has never had any other teacher.

In May, 1985, Kissin left the U.S.S.R. for the first time, playing at a gala in East Berlin attended by the East German President, Erich Honecker. "There were some circus performers," he recalls, "then I played Schumann and Chopin, and then a magician came out and did tricks." In October, 1986, he went to Japan; in January, 1987, he made his début in Western Europe, playing with the Berlin Radio Orchestra. On September 30, 1990, he made his Carnegie Hall début, with a program of Schumann, Prokofiev, Liszt, and Chopin. The response was overwhelming. Hundreds of concertgoers waited outside Carnegie's stage door for autographs, and the reviews were unanimous in their praise.

IN 1991, the Kissins invited Anna Pavlovna to live with them. At the end of that year, the Kissins left Moscow for New York to facilitate Genya's growing international career, and Anna Pavlovna came with them. In New York, Genya's command of English progressed rapidly; he is by far the most fluent English-speaker in his family. Settled into an apartment in a modern building on Manhattan's Upper West Side, he found New York's combination of convenience and Moscow-like chaos congenial. He is an avid reader—he likes Russian poetry and musical biographies—but most of his non-performing hours are devoted to music and to the management of his professional life. "Genya's day-to-day existence is completely focussed on who he is as an artist," says Charles Hamlen, who, as Kissin's first American agent, oversaw the pianist's Carnegie Hall début, and who remains a close friend. "Most of the time he's either practicing, or performing, or recording, or dealing with the minutiae of his career. There's an underlying unity between his artistic and personal lives, and the lack of distinction between them is perhaps the cornerstone of his identity."

Despite the urgings of Kissin's various managers, he has consistently resisted hiring a personal assistant. He sorts through the vast number of faxes and phone messages he receives every day, discusses them with his family, and makes decisions about them. He makes most of the choices about the pieces he will perform and where and when he will play them. He is often in touch directly with the conductors with whom he likes to work. Edna Landau, who is his manager at International Management Group, an agency whose roster of clients includes sports as well as music celebrities, says, "The only problem about managing Genya is that he's just too busy to do a fraction of the work for which he's in demand."

Kissin's family remains the center of his social life, and what time he spends away from it is mostly with family and musical friends, many of whom speak Russian. Kissin, who spends more than two-thirds of the year touring, plays approximately fifty engagements. He is usually accompanied by his mother and Anna Pavlovna. Sometimes his father, who is retired, and his sister, who plays only for friends now, come along as well. "Having them with me on my travels is a help," Genya says, "but it's also the pleasure of the company." Anna Pavlovna nods gravely.



"There! That's the one."

"For the great part of our lives, we saw nothing, living in the Soviet Union. The days when we were taking Genya Kissin with us are gone. Now are the days when Genya is taking us, and we're very grateful."

Emilia Aronovna and Anna Pavlovna are seldom apart now, shopping together for groceries, in Manhattan, talking about piano literature and how fresh the chickens look and Genya's schedule in a constant pattering dialogue. One critic recalls meeting the pianist just after his Carnegie Hall début. "This," Kissin said, pointing to his mother, "is my teacher"; then, turning to Anna Pavlovna, he said, "And this is my mother"; then he blushed and corrected himself. Genya's mother and teacher have always respected each other, and their affection has had twenty years to mature. In her seventies, Kissin's teacher mixes austere seriousness with twinkling enthusiasm. She adores Genya as much as his mother does, but one feels that her love was harder to earn. She has the solid, square dimensions of a Maillol and piercing eyes. As a teacher, she made it a practice never to touch the keyboard, but to teach by speaking, with an expressiveness that goes well beyond the specific meaning of her words.

Anna Pavlovna and Genya's mother are still closely involved in figuring out programs, in discussing how much to play and to record. Upon arriving in any new hall, Genya runs through his program. Anna Pavlovna sits in one place to assess the performance, while Emilia Aronovna walks around the hall to check the acoustics and the distortions. Four lives—father, sister, mother, teacher—have been given over to Kissin's genius and to his enormous earning capacities. (His concert fees are in the highest bracket, averaging twenty-five thousand dollars an appearance.) Kissin seems entirely comfortable with the life of an international virtuoso. "Sometimes I regret that the course of my life was set so early," he told me one day. "But there was never any way to resist it. There is no way to change who I am. Sometimes I wish—I wish that it were different. I wish that I had had more time to bring myself up, in a different atmosphere, without any pressure. But even if my career had begun later, music would always have been the only thing that was important to me. That I would not change."

In his spare evenings, Kissin attends concerts and the opera and the ballet, especially to see or hear performers he knows. He has friends of his own with whom he plays chamber music from time to time, and whom he sometimes entertains by playing ragtime—though he has never performed such material in public. When we went to a party in New York thrown by a mutual friend, he was modest and polite, almost offhand, when other guests came over to praise his abilities. Lately, there have been suggestions in the press that he should get out from under the protective umbrella of his family, that he should somehow become more of an all-American young man. (Similar suggestions were lobbed thirty years ago at Van Cliburn, whose mother was a powerful presence in his career.) Kissin bridles at such talk. "I don't understand why everyone here is so eager to destroy my relationship to my family," he said in an interview shortly after his arrival in this country. Kissin could no more live a "normal" life than could Prince William, and it is part of his dignity not to try. He has dozens of young female admirers but, he says, "I haven't met anyone yet I'd like to spend my life with."

It used to be commonly thought that prodigies were exceptions to the laws of development—repositories of gifts that were categorically different from those of other children. Increasingly, however, child psychologists see prodigies as individuals in whom the pace of development in a single area is vastly accelerated, but whose developmental processes are not otherwise unusual. Some researchers claim that musical predisposition occurs in children who are hypersensitive to sound, who are driven to order the noise around them, so that it becomes less disturbing. According to the Israeli psychiatrist Pinchas Noy, "The ego . . . is compelled to attain considerable abilities in order to protect itself. . . . [It] develops a superior capacity to organize auditory stimuli, to discern among their various shades, and, in particular, to transform 'painful' stimuli so that [they can provide] gratification and pleasure. . . . Listening to music [becomes] an activity of the ego in the service of mastering auditory stimuli that, in their deeper meaning, are threatening and frightening." This notion that highly discriminative hearing helps deal with overwhelming sound has been argued persuasively. But music is surely more than the reorganization of traumatic noise, just as love is more than the reworking of early losses.

Music, which is a system of abstract sound, is broadly acknowledged as a precursor to speech—a system of *significant* sound. Just as deaf children will begin to communicate with physical gestures, deploying them instead of phonemes to initiate colloquy, musical prodigies begin to use musical sounds as a means of conveying information from an early age. Music for them is not a readaptation of the aural experiments of pre-speech; it is speech itself.

Handel sang before he began to talk; music was, in effect, his first language. Arthur Rubinstein's childhood identification of people was based on the tunes he heard them sing, and he would designate them with these leitmotivs. He expressed his desires through music, singing a mazurka, for example, when he wanted cake. Fortunately, his family was musical enough to be able to decode these communications. Similarly, Kissin interpreted his family, and visiting friends, through musical composition and performance. For prodigies such as Kissin and Rubinstein, fascination with abstract auditory stimuli and the translation of them into concrete meaning represent not a sub-verbal but a super-verbal ability.

The psychologist John Sloboda makes a useful comparison between musical and verbal linguistics: "Musical idioms are not languages, and do not have referential meaning in the way that languages such as English do. They do, however, have complex multi-levelled structural features which resemble syntax or grammar." This suggests that, as we have long known is true of language, a deep structure of music exists in the brain even before the hearing of tunes, and it can be readily vitalized by exposure to musical sounds. Involvement of parents is crucial to the emergence of this faculty in a child: not only must there be a way to speak musically through either the voice or available instruments but also there must be people present to understand that speech. The anthropologist Robert Garfias has asserted that "the roots of each different music structure are inherent and inseparably linked to the structure of spoken language," and that "the two are, in fact, a single system, which is acquired from the earliest stages of infancy through the infant's constant processing of the sounds of human voices around him. . . . I believe that music may be man's primary means of sustaining a process of socialization."

The musicologist John Bailey has posited that early musical performance is contingent on a child's acquiring a "motor grammar"—that the physical dexterity required to produce music early in life far exceeds the level of physical coördination that young children otherwise possess. The prodigy, driven to express himself musically, goes through a process uncannily like the process of acquiring Sign among deaf children.

CONVERSING with Evgeny Kissin over a period of several months, I realized that he talks the way I play the piano. Musical performance is a mode from which I derive pleasure; but though my level of understanding is adequate my expressive abilities are frustratingly insufficient to what I really have to say. So it is for Kissin and speech. His high intelligence and complex modes of thought are indicated, but not expressed, by his conversation. Kissin has a slight speech impediment, a lingering on explosive consonants that then burst forth like popping balloons. His speech is broken by long pauses; there often seems to be nothing organic leading from one word to the next. Every unexpressive word comes out glacially, always lying in proximity to his meaning and never containing it.

I had been playing with linguistic theories for some time before I put them to him. We were sitting in his simply furnished apartment; he and his family were getting ready to pack up for a move to a larger, older apartment nearby. Our meeting was impromptu; I'd called on the phone, and he'd suggested that I come over. We were both rather tired. He was wearing a pair of old, ill-fitting jeans, a greenish shirt, and bedroom slippers. His mother and Anna Pavlovna were shopping, and his father and sister were out of town. We sat in the small room where the piano—a baby-grand Steinway, on loan from the company—stood, its lid closed, its surface cluttered with greeting cards.

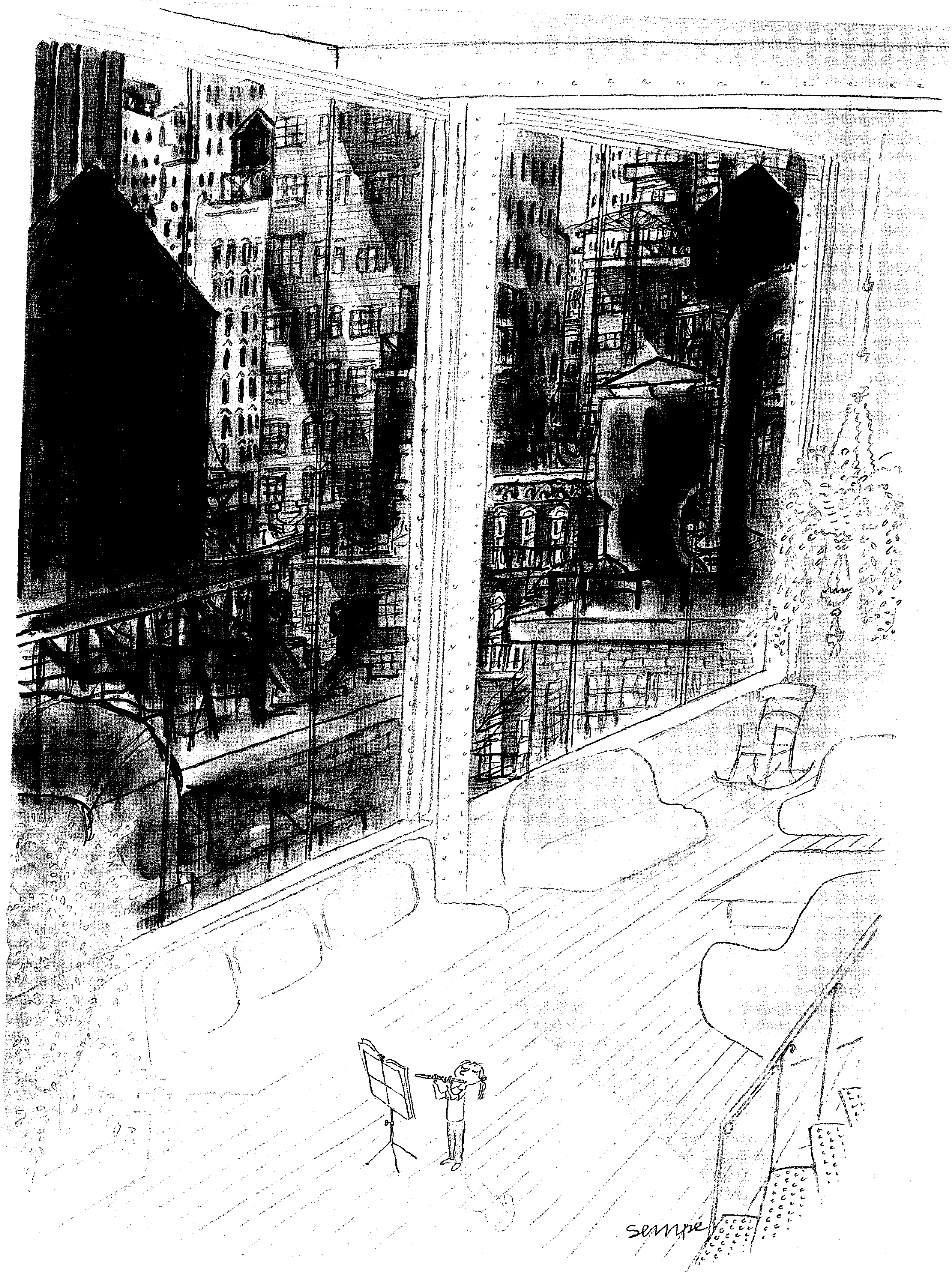
I wanted to know something about the structure of a Rachmaninoff cadenza. "This one?" Genya asked, and played six bars. Suddenly, the little room filled—overflowed—with music. On the tape the effect is alarmingly abrupt. There is perhaps ten minutes of conversation, which, as usual, is a bit stilted, punctuated with long silences broken by the staccato of Genya's speech. And then there is no effort, no forcing, no impediment to communication. Another five minutes of effortful speech, and then Kissin plays two minutes of a Chopin ballade he is preparing for his next season. The sound on my ten-year-old Sony tape recorder was so immense in contrast to the speech that when I first listened to the tape I thought I had bumped the volume control. The notes contained all the feeling absent from the words; the portcullis blocking the inner self from public view seemed to lift. When Genya played, what I heard was a yearning to be understood—the primary source of the beauty of his music. While we had been talking, Genya had several times had to suppress a yawn, explaining that he had not slept well the previous evening; when he was playing, the exhaustion disappeared from his face. It was not the polished way he would perform for a concert audience, and when he performs the piece next year he will doubtless add studied subtleties and intricacies. He was playing only to indicate passages to which I had alluded; but I knew we had by then come to like each other, and I felt, for the first time since we met, that we were in full conversation, that he was conveying something immediate, personal, and emotional. It was like receiving a confidence or a declaration of friendship, as intimate as a physical embrace. I wanted to respond to what I had heard, but I do not speak that language, and when Genya stopped playing I reverted to words, thus bringing him back to words. It was like dragging clouds back across a momentary sun.

I asked whether he thought speech sometimes fell short of conveying his feelings. "Speaking in words is much less for me," he said. "In fact, I don't even know how to convey through speech at all. What I have to say, the music says it. And I don't like to try to speak about the music, either: it speaks for itself. For me, there is no translating this." The fact that music is, in effect, a first language no more guarantees brilliant use of that language than the fact that English is the first language for most American children means that they will all be poets. Apollinaire famously said that artists fall into two categories: that of the perfect virtuoso, who exploits an unmediated "natural" gift (the usual model for the prodigy), and that of the reflective artist, who builds insight around experience. Kissin has managed to enact a musical transformation from the former model to the latter.

His task is to discover the "truth" of the work he is playing through the assertion of his own "truth." For him, the world is, literally, bounded by music. He reminds me of Wallace Stevens's vision of the supreme artist, the beachwalker in the poem "The Idea of Order at Key West," for whom "there never was a world . . . Except the one she sang and, singing, made."

I asked Kissin what he would do if his career were to go awry. "I never thought of it," he replied, "but if my career were suffering, I would be able to find comfort only in music, in the piano. I don't know how I would be able to live if I suddenly became unable to play." For him, music makes sense of the world by ordering—rebalancing—its forces, and it is for this reason that his playing seems to makes sense of the world for his audiences. Communicating is supremely important for him. He often has extra seats placed around him on the stage, right next to the piano itself, so that additional people can attend his concerts. "It's strange, but the more people there are in the hall, the better I play," he said. "It's necessary for me to

SKETCHBOOK BY J.J. SEMPÉ

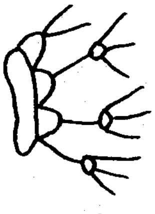


play a piece in public to master it. The whole perception changes. I feel people's attentiveness, and my performance depends on it."

Is Kissin growing as an artist? Already—at twenty-four—he is the subject of doubts of the sort voiced recently by Bernard Holland, the *Times* music critic. "I'm troubled by the uniformity of his approach," Holland said. "He is without question the great talent of his generation. But though he's above the 'Soviet School,' he is still restricted by it. He has been trained to see music as big, as complicated, as loud, as speed. Some music is not so grand. When I heard Kissin play five years ago, I thought this kid has got it all; he's new to the West and he'll get over these Soviet habits and be the greatest artist. I heard him this January, and he hasn't undergone any real evolution. What Kissin does is terrific for some music, but I'm sad that such an enormous talent has been channelled into such a one-size-fits-all style."

I would put the matter differently: Kissin's playing is always imaginative, but the unchanging imagination, no matter how rich, can easily go stale. He expresses little interest in contemporary music, and so he continues to play—beautifully—pieces that have been played beautifully for sixty, a hundred, two hundred years. His interpretations are entirely his own, but it is possible that he needs to do something else, something new, something beyond mere brilliance. The contemporary-minded critics who hold that historicism is deadly say that what Kissin is doing—some Mozart, some Beethoven, Schumann, lots of Chopin and Liszt, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev—is merely repetitive. Though there is scant evidence that playing new music renews pianistic talent, venturing into less familiar musical territory could only enrich Kissin's palette. Itzhak Perlman has said, "You can't play a Beethoven violin concerto for the five hundredth time and expect it to be always fresh. It wasn't written to be played that many times by one person."

"Is he playing it safe?" Hamlen asks. "In the first place, what Genya chooses to perform is not *all* that he is playing. What we see in performance is certainly more circumscribed than what's happening artistically. In any event, he's certainly not stagnating. Everything he plays is surprising because he makes it surprising. He can't play anything in a routine way because playing itself isn't routine to him."



Inevitably, because of his phenomenal early celebrity and pianistic grandeur, Kissin gets compared to Van Cliburn. He seems to have moved into the post-prodigy phase with somewhat greater ease than the Texan did, but although part of Cliburn's deterioration was personal—he was seduced by glamour in a way that Kissin will not be—he also suffered from a failure to expand his musical reach, and his favorite pieces and favorite composers became as dull for his audiences as they must have become for him. The contemporary pianist has at his disposal the largest repertoire ever composed for any solo instrument. Although Kissin is still in what one hopes are the early stages of a career that could run another sixty years, he seems to have no clear plans for the long-term shape of his vocation. Indeed, in his playing itself there is a tremendous forward propulsion that can sometimes seem as though it is hastening urgently toward no particular goal.

Of Camille Saint-Saëns, one of the nineteenth century's greatest prodigies, who lived in the constant sunlight of adulation, Hector Berlioz said, "He knows everything, but he lacks inexperience." Evgeny Kissin's gift has never led him to laziness, and the protectiveness of his family and his teacher has not prevented him from having the emotional experiences that inform true art. When I asked him how he had managed to avoid the prodigy burnout of so many wunderkinder, he said, "Simply this: I was brought up well, in a proper way." Perhaps the challenge for Kissin lies not so much in gaining worldly experience as it does in engaging in greater struggles, in finding greater fear of the piano literature. Next year, he will take six months off from his relentless touring and recording, simply to think and play for himself, as he has not had time to do since his career began. What might come of such a sabbatical? He says cryptically, "Life itself will show me what to do."

WATCHING Kissin sit down at the piano is like watching a lamp get plugged in: decorative though it may have seemed before, it is only when electricity courses through it that its real use becomes apparent. You do not feel so much that he is pouring energy into the instrument as that he is receiving energy from it. His hands seem actually to *belong* to the piano. In June, I went to the Barbican Hall in London to hear Kissin perform the Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto. It was one of the most magnificent concerts I've ever heard.

Kissin is Rachmaninoff's stylistic heir: his playing has the non-neurotic, Tolstoyan sweep of the older pianists. At the beginning of the concerto, his posture was tense. During the orchestra's account of the beautiful opening theme, he tugged for a second at his lower lip, as he does when he is deep in thought. But finally, when he began to play, it was as though Zeus had descended among the mortals. In order to articulate the immensely complex structures of the first movement, Rachmaninoff doubles the piano line with, variously, the cello, the flute, the horn. Kissin's hands made everything clear—one's ears did not need those crutches to follow this torrential work. Despite the speed in many of the passages, the motion of Kissin's hands was always *legible*—as if they were moving in sign language. At the concerto's end, there was a long moment of silence, then a standing ovation. I was sitting with Emilia Aronovna and Anna Pavlovna. Genya's mother counted the number of people standing, while his teacher stayed in her seat. "I think it was good," she said, and I supposed that she was recalling her first encounters with that vast childlike imagination, which under her tutelage had only continued to expand. Kissin was unable to explain the performance. Later, he said, "I just start playing a piece again and it sounds different, not because I *want* it to sound different but simply because I myself have changed. Pushkin said, 'I live in order to think and to suffer.' Life itself brings change."

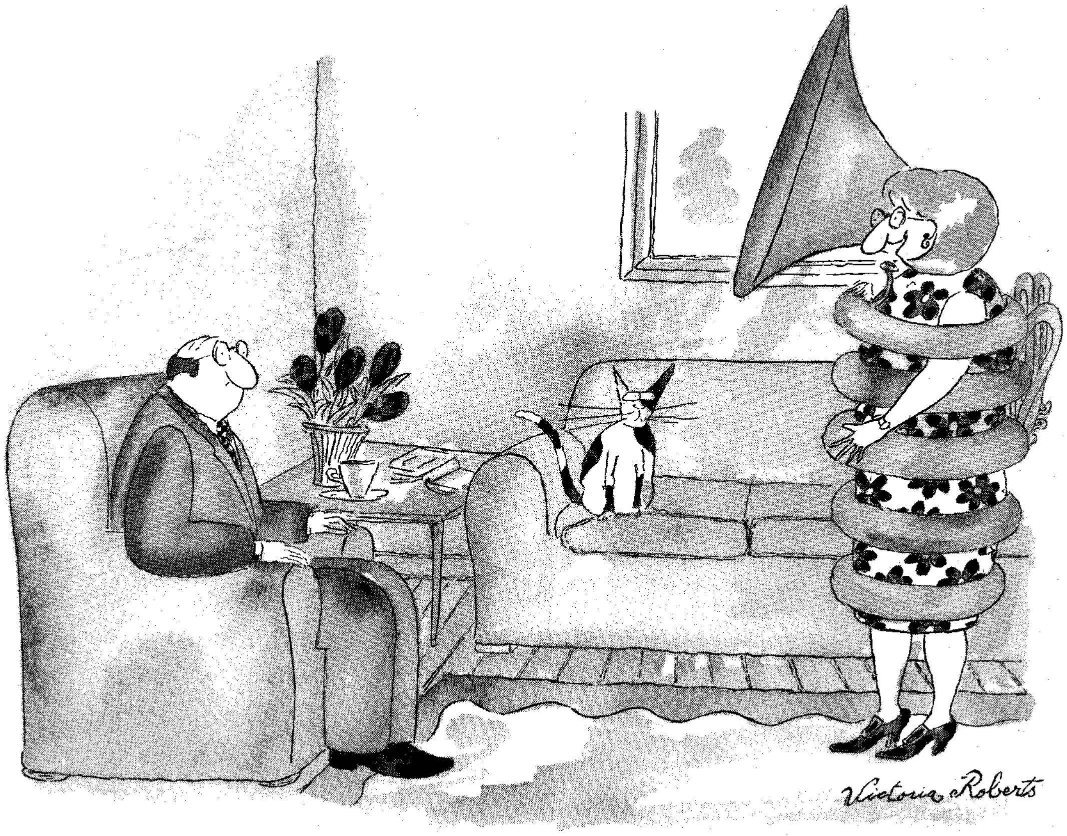
I recalled another Kissin concert I'd attended several weeks earlier, in the northern Italian city of Bergamo, where the audience seemed composed largely of local businessmen and their wives. The recital concluded with a Kissin specialty, the monumentally difficult Brahms "Variations on a Theme by Paganini," which he played without boundaries or edges. The applause was tumultuous. Kissin stood up, bowed his stiff bow, and walked offstage, looking as placid as though he'd just finished lunch. The applause redoubled, and he came back on, gestured up to the balconies, bowed again, and smiled, apparently delighted to discover that all these people had enjoyed what he himself had so evidently enjoyed. For his first encore, he played a Chopin mazurka. It was charming, and the audience clapped merrily. He took a few more bows, then played Weber's "Perpetuum Mobile." Applause; bows. Then Brahms's Hungarian Dances Nos. 6 and 7. After that, some of the concertgoers, perhaps thinking that the encores were over, began to file out of the hall. More bows; then Kissin played a Chopin waltz. Applause, bows, then a fifth encore: Beethoven's "Rage Over a Lost Penny," in an interpretation so playful that the audience burst out laughing.

A game had started: encore, applause, bows, encore. The ovations seemed to challenge Kissin to keep playing. He played the Adagio from the Bach/Busoni Fantasy, Adagio, and Fugue, then Chopin's E-Minor Waltz, after which a woman rushed to the stage, attacked a floral arrangement, grabbed an anthurium, and handed it to him. Next came Rachmaninoff's legendary encore, his own Prelude in C-Sharp Minor, which was followed by the stamping of feet.

They would not let Kissin go. After he had played the Brahms Intermezzo No. 6 from Opus 116, Kissin took six curtain calls. Then a man in one of the upper balconies leaned out, spread his hands like a conductor, and began to clap slowly and rhythmically. Soon the entire audience was clapping in unison. Kissin reëmerged and shrugged. Wearing a genial but slightly blank expression, he played the Rondo alla turca from Mozart's A-Major Sonata. More rhythmic clapping. After six more curtain calls, Kissin sat down to play the Intermezzo from Schumann's "Carnaval." After the twelfth encore, someone shouted "Tchaikovsky!" and Kissin, nodding the way rich people acknowledge small charities, sat down and played a Tchaikovsky waltz. Now the audience clapped and stamped in unison, so insistently that the whole building began to tremble. Kissin seemed bewildered. He walked on and off the stage a dozen times before his final encore—the Brahms Rhapsody from Opus 119. It was as colorful and fresh as the first notes he had played that night.

By now, it was well after midnight. "Come," an older woman said, stopping her husband's hands as he clapped. "The boy should go to sleep." Finally, the applause petered out. Kissin did not reappear.

At the stage door, a crowd pressed tight. A guard held people back, letting in thirty or so, then a few more, and then a few more. I got past the guard to find Genya standing backstage, nodding his formal nod to the congratulators and signing "Kissin" in Roman letters on the pieces of paper they held out: photos of him, albums, programs. He smiled politely while one fan and then another posed with him for a snapshot. After he had given perhaps a hundred and fifty signatures, his mother came out of the dressing room. She took his arm very gently and said something in Russian. The disappointed fans who had not got his signature took pictures as he walked between her and Anna Pavlovna to a waiting car. As the engine started, a last round of applause, loud and pulsing, went up from the crowd. When the car was gone, people turned to one another—surprised, apparently, to find themselves on an ordinary spring night in Bergamo. "It's late," the man standing next to me said. "Terribly late," he said, before disappearing down the dark street, as though to explain the sudden silence. ♦



"Howard, I found my instrument!"

MAGNUM PHOTOS

HONEY: *Ella Fitzgerald, the First Lady of Jazz, floated like a butterfly, made sweet like a bee. Photograph by Dennis Stock.*

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SMOKE: *Marlene Dietrich, the lily by the lamppost, made slaves of the boys in the back room. Photograph by Milton H. Greene.*

MONEY: *Madonna, the Queen of Now, has made millions out of self-reincarnation as everything from Marilyn Monroe to the tart with the*

whip to a one-woman conglomerate. Now she's got a new role—expectant mother—and she can't stop smiling. Photograph by Herb Ritts.

PERSONAL HISTORY

SPINNING TALES

What do d.j.s do? Reinvent themselves in music.

BY HILTON ALS

IN 1982, we were twenty-one. Miss V.'s parents were Latvians who had immigrated to New Jersey; I was the child of Barbadians who had immigrated to Brooklyn. We wanted to be known in New York, which was the only part of America we were interested in then. Our parents were cut off from America because it was not their home; Miss V. and I cut ourselves off from our parents by making New York our home. Miss V. walked up and down the streets of lower Manhattan in heels too adult for her baby ankles. Occasionally she would fall down in her pretty thrift-store party dress, and we would laugh.

We tried to be really evil. We dropped 'ludes. We dropped anyone who had the temerity to fall in love with us. Miss V. and I were meal whores of a sort. Older men who had made money in America fed us, but we were still hungry. We cut our terms of approbation in half: "fabulous" was "Fab!"; "gorgeous" was "Gorge!"; "brilliant" was "Brill!" We emulated the d.j.s we heard on the radio and in clubs. We wanted to be as smooth and accessible as Frankie Crocker sounded on WBLS. We wanted to be as sophisticated as the dance music we heard at Interferon. We became involved in the social life that took place in clubs that featured the music we loved and where Miss V. knew the d.j. "We know the d.j."—that's what we said at the door to Save the Robots, an after-hours club on Avenue B, and at the entrance to Danceteria, in Chelsea.

We loved the romantic authority of d.j.s. Their authority was romantic because they were distant. You couldn't get to them unless you climbed up some stairs that always seemed to be at the back of the dance floor. Miss V. would stand on the threshold of the d.j. booth, not daring to speak. And yet the d.j.s expressed themselves directly and intimately through their choices: all other words spoken in the club were ephemeral to us. Standing bent over turntables, lifting and putting down the silver arms, the d.j.s we knew in the Mike Todd Room, at the Palladium, on Fourteenth Street, and at Hurrah, on the Upper West Side, looked like archeologists digging through popular music in search of themselves. These were the d.j.s we liked best—the ones who were producing their autobiographies through the music they played.

We stood in the d.j. booth and watched Larry Levan create that disco of cruelty known as the Paradise Garage, on King Street, near the West Side piers. All the queens and fag hags wearing green mechanics overalls and carrying paper fans were dancing on the floor below him, but Larry Levan was not interested in their love. He was interested in testing the limits of his audience's endurance. He played music that mimicked the effects of the drugs his audience had taken: "Keep It Confidential," by Nona Hendryx, was one song he played repeatedly. Levan's music was like the sound of cocaine: one short, intense burst of thinking and feeling joined to another by a bass line. Levan played both disco, which was then on its way out (LaBelle's "What Can I Do for You?"), and rap, which was just on its way in (Grandmaster Flash's "White Lines (Don't Do It)"). Levan's Saturdays, at the Paradise Garage, sounded like one disjunctive but continuous Top Forty hit.

Sometimes, after a night out, we went to the apartments of various gay male friends who held impromptu parties that stretched on until twilight. We were all exhausted, but no one wanted to go home. At these gatherings, the emotional climate was more teasing, and more intimate. The records they played expressed their ironic view of romantic heterosexual love (Vikki Carr's "It Must Be Him") and their reverence for heterosexual female despair (Phoebe Snow's "Poetry Man").

In those days, Miss V. and I did not use music as the notorious memory stimulator that it has become for us now, fifteen years after we began night clubbing. In those days, we didn't have much of a past to look back on. Now what we share more than a daily life is history; memories of our former selves are prompted by songs we hear on the car radio—"oldies but goodies"—and the dusty records we find in yard sales. I still go out to certain clubs, but less to hear the music—I have difficulty distinguishing among current musical trends such as house music, jungle music, trip-hop, hip-hop, and acid jazz—than to search out d.j.s who possess the authority that Miss V. and I used to look for. I no longer know the d.j.s in most places, and New York now lacks the spirited and cohesive night-club scene of our youth, but the d.j. is still the cynosure where clubs do exist. The d.j. can still hope to help people transform their daily selves through music—which is the experience people used to seek when they went out in the first place.

ONCE a month, after midnight at Flamingo East, on Second Avenue, and every Sunday night at Wonder Bar, on East Sixth Street, the d.j. known as Emjay plays to a mostly gay male crowd. The gay men who come to hear Emjay play are, on the average, in their mid-twenties, and, especially at Wonder Bar, dress in a baby-boy retro-seventies style, which involves wearing undersized polyester polo shirts that have oversized collars, with tight-fitting, brightly patterned trousers. Emjay's appearance is in direct contrast to that of his fans: he is over six feet tall, with powerful arms and hands; he has brown skin and a shaved head; and he has the winning smile of a benign adult in a world of boy children.

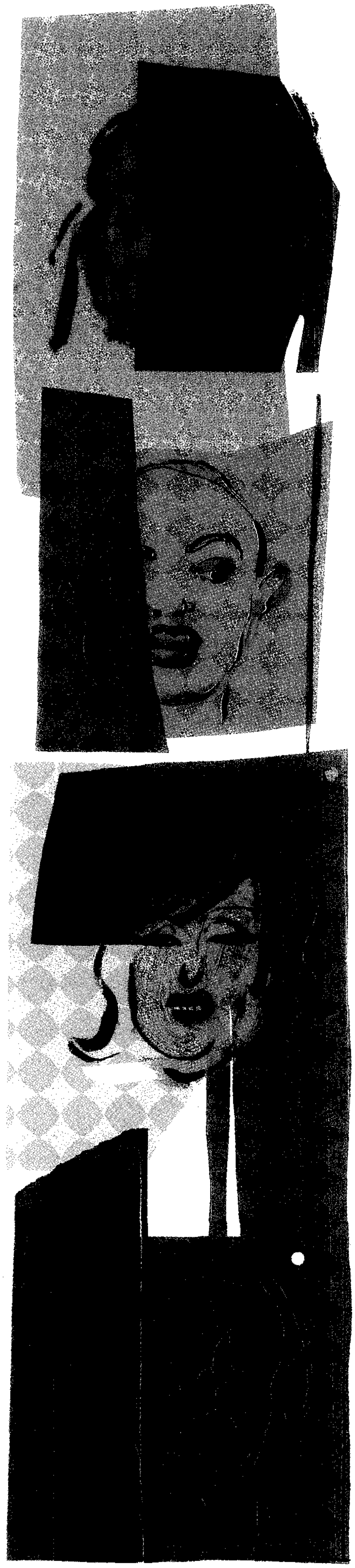
Emjay immigrated to New York from his native Trinidad, in 1974, and began spinning for some of his friends who started a rap group in Brooklyn. Now, however, although Emjay plays almost nothing but dance music—more specifically, dance music by black female vocalists whose range is enhanced by heavy doses of treble—he rarely sees his patrons dance. At Wonder Bar, most of Emjay's listeners sit and sway to the music as they engage in slightly disaffected conversation. This conversational style seems to define contemporary social interaction, just as, during my Miss V. days, dancing to what the d.j. played defined social interaction then. "It's a different time from the eighties," Emjay says. "Then it was all about going to kung-fu movies in Times Square, staying up all night and drinking forties, and, in the morning, buying the records you'd heard at Tracks the night before."

Night clubbing has been increasingly downsized, in mood as well as venue. If a club is not supported by big money, celebrities, tourists, or the vibe of the drug trade, its collective mood is probably relatively low-key; in fact, the most interesting d.j.s don't play in clubs—they play in bars with small dance floors, where everyone sits nursing drinks or joints, as if waiting for something to happen. ("The real definition of Generation X," a friend of mine remarked recently, "is not so much that they're repressed because of AIDS but that they've come to disapprove of all kinds of pleasure because of it.")

Some of Emjay's fans come not to listen but to watch and admire: at Wonder Bar, the d.j. booth is lit and positioned so as to enhance his authority. "Every d.j. has to have a face," Emjay explained to me one recent evening as he stood at Wonder Bar, spinning records. "The face of a d.j. has to be somewhat firm, because—well, people hit on you all the time. They want you to be Daddy, because you are—you're the d.j., the authority. Sometimes people come back here and try to sit, because they say the music makes them feel erotic. How are you supposed to respond when the music is *you*?"

Emjay's language on the subject of d.j.'ing and his gestures while d.j.'ing—his absolute seriousness when he puts on his headphones and cranes his neck in order to see where the groove starts on a record and then listens for the sound he wants to hear (the last line of Daphne singing "When You Love Someone" leading into "Save Us," by the Black Science Orchestra)—do seem paternal. When he hugs me by way of greeting, despite his physical grace and his mesmerizing voice, I feel like his thirteen-year-old daughter.

The cramped d.j. booth that Emjay plays in at Wonder Bar symbolizes the conundrum that many d.j.s are hemmed in by: the need both to gratify the listeners' musical desires and to establish some kind of musical independence, a signature style. "You never feel as if you'd reached your potential as a d.j.," Emjay said. "You're the first person in and the last to leave, and you have to make everybody stay." And yet you also have to ignore the idea of listener gratification (playing requests), and take the audience where you mean to lead it—somewhere inside your head. "Playing what you want—that's what it's about."



Folding the past into the present (from top): DJ Spooky, Belinda, Miss Lady Bunny, and Emjay.

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

I NEVER intended to become a d.j.—to indulge, in a public forum, a private obsession—but in New York's densely textured social world opportunities have a way of materializing. I was asked to d.j. at Bar d'O, in the West Village, by a d.j. who knew of my interest in esoteric funk—in Bette Davis, early Pointer Sisters, anyone who left Motown before 1979. The habits of my d.j.'ing often annoy other d.j.s. I do not arrange my records in any particular order. Nor do I have a flashlight or a night-light to help me locate the band on a record which I want to play. Nor do I know how to repair a turntable, let alone the rest of a sound system. For months, when I first began d.j.'ing, I wouldn't even put records back in their sleeves. I refuse to master the mechanics of d.j.'ing—to acknowledge my authority. Even so, I consider any request for something that lies outside my sphere of emotional interest—"Hi. Sorry to interrupt. You're doing a *great* job, but do you have, like, Abba?"—a form of sacrilege. The d.j.'s umbrage is that of the haughty masochist who feels more brutalized than most people but still wants crowd control.

The kind of music I play is the music of memory. Even the new music I'm drawn to, by such artists as Case and Foxy Brown (who duet on my current fave rave, "Touch Me Tease Me"), along with LL Cool J and Busta Rhymes, is evocative of my funky past—and not just mine. Generally, after 1 A.M. some of my listeners begin to dance, fortified in equal parts by liquor and nostalgia. They dance in various styles recalled from their disco days—the Bump, the Hustle, a modified Funky Chicken—while I pretend to be the historic radio d.j. Bob Lewis, the "big fat Daddy Poo." Sometimes, at closing, I'll play Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly with His Song," and one night a small white woman in her early forties tottered up to me, misty-eyed, and said, "I lost my virginity to this record."

The power of the d.j. is the ability to forever fold the past into the present. Chi Chi Valenti, who, with her husband, the d.j. Johnny Dynell, runs Jackie 60, which remains New York's only spectacular club (the *customers* are the spectacle), told me once that her husband never knows what year it is. "Sometimes he'll ask for a record when he's mixing a tape—the Rolling Stones' 'Love You Live,' say—and he won't remember the title. He'll say, 'They just released that album!' Yeah, like in 1977."

MISS LADY BUNNY, a famous drag queen around town, is currently d.j.'ing at Fez, the club inside Time Cafe, on Lafayette Street. Lady Bunny's music—which ranges from bad, gospel-inflected disco to obscure show tunes—is not separate from her double row of false eyelashes, her touring blond wig (it moves around on her head a lot), and her aristocratic-schlemiel appeal. Again, this aesthetic belongs to a time that many people younger than Lady Bunny's core audience—kids who are over thirty—cannot comprehend. Like many d.j.s, Lady Bunny moved to New York—in 1984, in her case—in order to pursue her commitment to becoming something other than herself. A native of North Carolina, Lady Bunny has lived in London, Tennessee, and Atlanta, where she became part of a drag circle that centered on the d.j. Larry Tee (the other drag queen of note in its orbit was RuPaul). Later, in New York, she established the first Wigstock festivals. When Lady Bunny spins in larger discos like the Limelight and the Tunnel, she draws a good crowd, probably because she seems utterly self-created and unrecognizable—something that many of the younger kids and tourists who frequent those places and gawk at her appearance can't imagine being.

Nowadays, Lady Bunny's listeners come not so much to dance as to drink cocktails, gossip, and sway. Her music envelops you in her humor. And Lady Bunny's humor is in the juxtaposition of the songs she plays: Diana Ross's "Surrender" followed by the comedian Martha Raye on "Zap the World." Lady Bunny's charisma is also based on the fact that her illusion is cracked. Her records are scratched; she is interested not in mixing but in the glamour that her memory attaches to the female singers who first inspired her to confront the world with her wig, false nails, and wit.

TRADITIONALLY, d.j.'ing has been a no woman's land. With the possible exceptions of Anita Sarko, who used to spin at the Palladium back when it opened, in 1985, and Sharee, who has developed a following in women's bars hosted by the glamorous impresario Wanda, Belinda is the only woman I have followed as a d.j. in New York. Like Emjay, Belinda does not use a last name. (Most d.j.s don't, preferring the familiarity and partial anonymity that come from using first names only.) Belinda's following comprises hip whites and hip blacks who have watched her since she began d.j.'ing, at Area, in 1987. Nostalgic for their Area moment—Area may have been the last true adult disco to be created in New York—many of Belinda's older fans follow her from club to club, in the hope that her music can rekindle the collective tribal energy that made New York night life the phenomenon it once was.

Traces of that phenomenon exist still in the environments where Belinda plays. Her presence suggests that maybe the party isn't really over—maybe it has only been misplaced. In the dark back room of B Bar, formerly the Bowery Bar, which has red leather banquettes, red-and-white checked tablecloths, and framed photographs of Asian and American drag queens striking attitudes in Thailand, Berlin, and New York, mixed-race twenty-somethings with interesting hairdos come to listen. They don't dance, but they seem to admire Belinda's perseverance in playing music meant for dancing.

Belinda projects a reserved authority that goes beyond her striking looks (taffy-colored skin, a diminutive gymnast's body) and signature sounds ("Make It Funky," by James Brown, "Return of the Hip Hop Freaks," by Nice & Smooth). Her aura is that of a woman who has waited out other obvious trends (disco, cocaine freaks, the ways in which men have responded to her beauty) in order to continue communicating the excitement that made her want to d.j. in the first place. "It was American soul that did it," she told me, and her words recalled certain aspects of my conversations with Emjay—in particular, the black immigrant's desire to understand and connect with black America through music. "I fell in love with black American music on the radio when I first came here, from Jamaica, eighteen years ago," she said, "Black American soul—it reminded me of reggae, in that you felt something when you listened to it or played it."

Not unlike Ruby Keeler in "42nd Street," Belinda was asked to substitute on a moment's notice for a d.j. in Area's lounge, where she used to hang out with her former husband, Serge Becker, who is now a co-owner of B Bar. "The d.j. didn't show up one night, so I showed up—everyone knew I collected records," Belinda said. As part of a circle that attempted to make New York night life inventive while gearing the fun toward adults as opposed to teen-age out-of-towners, the way it is geared now, Belinda took lessons in d.j.'ing from established masters who were also on the scene, including the great Johnny Dynell. "I would go to Johnny, and he would help me find the beat to mix on," she said, referring to the moment when it's ideal to segue into the next record.

"It usually comes in the break, when there's not so much confusing noise." She laughed. "I suppose what d.j.s do is try to make sense of confusing social noise—everything's a bit boring now—and just make it social."

COACH
CHENEY

"You call that Wagner?"

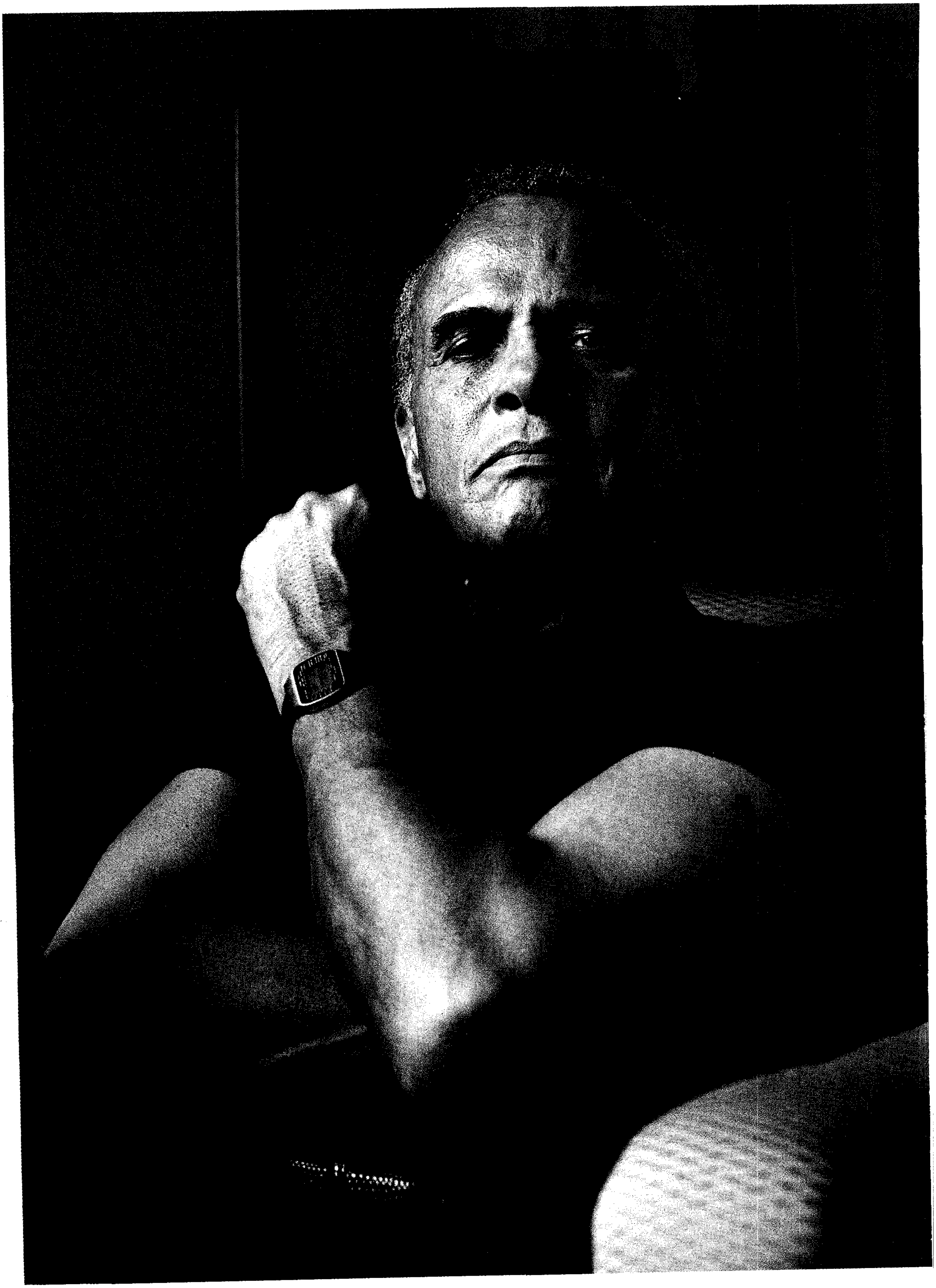
• •

IF most d.j.s these days are mixers of memory, Paul Miller, who spins Tuesday nights at Von, on Bleecker Street, represents the future: the d.j. as promoter of a new aesthetic. Miller, a twenty-five-year-old black man known as DJ Spooky . . . That Subliminal Kid, or DJ Spooky, or just plain Spooky, has wide-set eyes and wheat-tipped dreadlocks the shape of tagliatelle pasta. He is the host of what he refers to as "low-stress salon evenings," d.j.'ing for an audience whose members clearly want to be associated with his nonthreatening hipness. By associating with the Subliminal Kid ("I got that name from William Burroughs's 'Nova Express'; 'Spooky' is something the cartoon character Count Chocula used to say," Miller explains), those of a certain age and degree of wealth get to feel that their countercultural tendencies have not been sublimated. Although Miller considers artists who became famous in the eighties as "not contributing much to the culture," because "they focussed on money and killed off everything vibrant and made the nineties sterile," he is sometimes compared, by stolid avant-gardists now in their mid-forties or older, to the late artist Jean Michel Basquiat. In fact, the painter Julian Schnabel had at one point shown interest in casting Miller as Basquiat in his recently released film about the artist, not just because Miller's energy and allure are considered evocative of Basquiat's own but because Miller is a visual artist himself, whose work is conceptual and is often painted silver. ("What does silver represent?" Miller said. "Mercury. The god of communication.")

Miller, who is acutely aware of his vogue, works on a number of projects at once. He has an upcoming one-man show at the Annina Nosei Gallery, where Basquiat showed work, early in his career. Miller is also completing his first novel, "And Now a Message from Our Sponsors," along with a book of critical theory, which is provisionally entitled "Flow My Blood the DJ Said," and which Miller describes as "a book about intellectual property values, urban youth culture, and electronic imagination." When I met him, he was about to do several interviews in conjunction with the release of his CD containing extended combinations of the ambient sound he prefers, which is entitled "Songs of a Dead Dreamer." With a double major in philosophy and French literature at Bowdoin, Miller began d.j.'ing because "I'm into a collage of different realities." He established a program on the college radio station called "Dr. Seuss' Eclectic Jungle," which he describes as "radical sonic mutations," and he explains, "After I read Luigi Russolo's 'The Art of Noises,' it blew my mind. I realized people were compartmentalizing sound. I'm into remixing."

"He's a thinker—thinking is part of the whole Spooky aura. That's what makes him so fabulous," said Tara, a pretty young woman who was at Von one recent Tuesday night. Tara, like most members of DJ Spooky's audience—who stand or sit in Von's dimly lit lounge, which contains a tattered sofa, freestanding speakers, and glass cabinets full of dusty bottles of wine behind the wooden bar—has a reverential attitude toward Spooky's aesthetic. And, generally, the language applied to DJ Spooky, whether it's descriptive or critical, is nearly as incomprehensible as his signature sound. One tall young white man with a long patch of hair jutting from his chin said to me, "DJ Spooky is the next millennium. He is not black, he is not white, he is New York as a Third World country; the records he plays are about the confusion we all experience as neither men nor women in a totally fucked technological age. That's what his music is meant to be—it's meant to sound like nothing."

Actually, DJ Spooky's music doesn't sound like nothing. What it does sound like is the grumblings of an over-intellectualized mind. Spooky plays records from different periods—cocktail music of the fifties, poetry readings from the sixties, eighties rap—at speeds of his own choosing, thereby manipulating the singer's, or the speaker's, locution. What the listener is meant to hear—backed by a beat that is often wobbly and slow—is an intellectualization of the kind of funk I still like to play, but with no fag irony, and no humor. With or without a beat, I don't know if Miss V. and I could dance to it at all. ♦



MUSIC AND POLITICS

BELAFONTE'S BALANCING ACT

While Harry Belafonte was becoming white America's biggest singing star, he was also bankrolling Martin Luther King, Jr. Since then, he's made some of the hardest choices in show business—to the occasional exasperation of friends like Sidney Poitier and Bill Cosby.

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

FOR one week in February of 1968, something strange happened to the "Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson: it became the "Tonight Show" with Harry Belafonte. I was a high-school student, growing up in Piedmont, West Virginia, a partly segregated hamlet in the Allegheny Mountains, and television was the only thing that connected any of us there with the larger world. Night after night, my father and I stayed up late to watch a black man host the highest-rated show in its time slot—history in the making.

This was the year my father and I bonded over the Vietnam War—or, anyway, over our ongoing arguments on the subject, the point being that it gave us something to talk about. By now, I knew I had the moral high ground, a fact I determined by a rough head count of the celebrities who had weighed in on my side. So it was in that spirit—vindication on my part, mistrust on his—that my father and I sat together on our rust-red brocatelle sofa in front of the television set. Who had ever seen so many famous black folks (Sidney Poitier, Bill Cosby, Lena Horne, Wilt Chamberlain, for starters) on the "Tonight Show"?

On the second evening, Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged from behind the curtain. "What do you have in store for us *this* summer?" Belafonte asked him, flashing a provocative smile: white folks were still reeling from the riots that had come with the previous year's long hot summer. The studio audience laughed nervously.

King, looking tired and a little heavy, announced that he was shifting his emphasis from strictly racial issues. "The time has come to bring to bear the power of the nonviolent direct-action movement on the basic economic conditions that we face all over the country," he said, in his rich, rolling baritone. He pointed out that poverty among blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and Appalachian whites had reached "Depression levels."

"Then someone is lying to the American people," Belafonte declared, in a voice that was half silk, half outrage.

Back in Piedmont, I rose from my seat. "Go ahead, brother!" I shouted: Johnny Carson was never like this.

King went on to argue that the war in Vietnam was at odds with the war on poverty. "A major myth, the guns-and-butter philosophy," King said. All the money spent on that senseless war meant that "you don't get butter—in fact, you don't even get oleo!"

"Right on, Dr. King!" I yelled at the TV set. And my father snapped, "I *told* you he was a Communist."

"Do you fear for your life?" Belafonte asked King, abruptly striking a sombre note. King explained that he'd reconciled himself to the danger he faced. "Suffering is redemptive," he said. "If something happens to me, maybe something good will come of it." Enormous applause burst forth from the studio audience, and my eyes misted over.

Harry Belafonte: Was he not Negro manhood at its finest? Was he not the perfect hybrid of popular culture and political conscience? It was the air of principle, of moral certitude, of engagement—not to mention those teeth, those cheekbones. You simply didn't hear this kind of thing in those days, not on network TV. That week, I knew I had been witness to a great event, though in time it became less clear whether it was the start of something or the end. Two months after his appearance

PHOTOGRAPH BY HELMUT NEWTON

Belafonte: "Hollywood was symptomatic—the problem was the nation."

on the show, King was assassinated; Robert F. Kennedy, who had appeared later that week with Belafonte, was shot in June.

IT'S close to three decades later, and Harry Belafonte is giving me a tour of his Manhattan apartment, on West End Avenue. He's closing in on seventy, and his face isn't uncreased, but his mocha skin still has a glow and his movements have a rangy, almost feline grace. Two physical anomalies lend his presence a peculiar intensity. First, he's ever so slightly walleyed, and somehow the result is to make his gaze seem especially intimate. Second, his speaking voice is a husky whisper, which has the inadvertent effect of giving everything he says a tone of confiding urgency, though in fact it's just the aftermath of a long career. ("My chronic laryngitis," he said back in the fifties, "is the organic symptom of subconscious feelings of guilt about my success.") He's still the great talker he always was, though. Get him started on international politics and he'll perorate like Che Guevara or, anyway, Jesse Jackson. If he hadn't been Mr. Entertainment, he would have been huge on the hustings.

Belafonte bought the apartment building, one of the grandest on the street, in the late fifties; he sold off the apartments as co-ops a couple of years later but kept a floor for himself. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was a guest here often, described it as "palatial," and after visiting all twenty-one rooms I can see why. Belafonte and Julie, his wife of forty years, have made the place into a sort of museum. There are paintings by Marc Chagall and Diego Rivera; there must be half a dozen works by the African-American social realist Charles White. The décor has the settled air of mid-century leftism: canvases by artists who had congenial views on the relation between art and social action.

Photographs of Paul Robeson are prominent here, and for good reason. If Belafonte had a hero in life, it was Robeson, the legendary singer, actor, intellectual, social activist, and left-wing martyr. The shadow of Robeson haunted a generation of black artists and performers, and Belafonte, who loved him and witnessed his destruction during the Red Scare, was part of that generation. Belafonte's pronouncements on the state of the world retain an old-time Robesonian fervor. He says things like "Monopoly capitalism is bigger than government—it buys and sells governments." Despite the hushed gravel of his conversation, his singing voice is actually quite well preserved: even now, his "Daaay-o!" comes out full-throated enough for any banana loader to hear. A good thing, too, because—what with the legacy of colonial exploitation and the depredations of the United Fruit Company—he still worries about those dockworkers.

Politics, it sometimes seems, is what Belafonte did instead of the more wholesome, more *normal* preoccupations of the American superstar—namely, drugs, debauchery, and dissipation. On some level, surely, we want our idols to engage in the sins of the flesh—on our behalf, as it were—and, being obliging souls, they usually do. By contrast, the celebrity who makes heavy weather of his political convictions strikes us (when they are not our convictions) as recklessly indulgent: what's violated is the intricate, unwritten covenant between celebrities and their fans. We elevate them to godlike stature, but heaven forbid they should think they're better than us. If you follow.

Harry Belafonte was radical before it was chic and remained so long after it wasn't. He made decisions, in consequence, that hurt his career. Many of these decisions strike me as misguided, contradictory, shortsighted, and bullheaded—but impossible not to admire. If Belafonte is, as publicists say, "back"—playing one of the leads in Robert Altman's latest experiment in improvisation, "Kansas City"—it helps to know what, in Belafonte's case, "back" really means.

For a couple of years in the late fifties, Belafonte was arguably the most desirable man in the Western world. He was the first black matinée idol in the history of the film industry. He was the first artist (of any color) in the history of the recording industry to have a platinum album. As a live performer, he was unrivalled both in the size of the crowds he attracted and in the size of his contracts. Such success could be explained by his being a brilliant actor with an amazing voice, except that he wasn't a brilliant actor and didn't have an amazing voice. It was nothing so undemocratic as supernal talent that made Belafonte a demigod.

Over the past year, I've heard dozens of explanations of what did make him one, and why he survived. The critic Stanley Crouch says, "I never underestimate the skin-tone factor. The thing is, he wasn't *black* black." Johnny Carson tells me, "I think people perceive him as a nice person, and, if people seem to like you, that's half the game in the entertainment business." And, Carson delicately explains, the comfort factor figures all the larger when you bring in the race factor: "That's why today, for example, a lot of white Americans find great comfort with a Colin Powell and find *dis*comfort with a Jesse Jackson. Jesse Jackson, who has the strident cadence of a preacher, gets people excited. Colin Powell is not perceived as a threat. Perception is a lot in this business." The explanation I like the best, though, comes from the great folk singer Odetta. Speaking as if to a slow child, she says, "Did you get a look at the man?"

BELAFONTE points out that he was born the same year, 1927, that Marcus Garvey was deported to Jamaica from the United States. But, while Garvey wasn't without his influence in the Belafonte family, neither was he the household god he had been for many other West Indians in New York. Though Belafonte's mother was from Jamaica and his father from Martinique, both his mother's mother and his father's father (a gentleman named Bellanfanti, from Marseilles) were white. Belafonte was born in New York and spent most of his early years there; but in 1935, when riots and looting erupted in Harlem, his mother, a domestic worker, decided to take her family back to Jamaica. Belafonte spent the next five years in the Blue Mountains, in St. Anne's, and in Kingston.

Sidney Poitier, who is Belafonte's best friend and nearly exact contemporary, says that the childhood years they spent in the West Indies gave them a psychological advantage: colonialism aside, growing up in a black-majority country meant that most of the doctors, nurses, lawyers, and policemen you encountered were black. "I firmly believe," Poitier says, "that we both had the opportunity to arrive at the formation of a sense of ourselves without having it fucked with by racism as it existed in the United States."

In 1940, Belafonte returned to Harlem, and ended up in a largely Italian neighborhood. On the streets, kids squared off as the Hawks versus the Scorpions. Most of Belafonte's relatives in America, he recalls, were in rackets like the numbers business. Nor did school provide any respite: burdened by dyslexia, he dropped out after ninth grade. He finally escaped from the neighborhood, at seventeen, by joining the Navy. He scrubbed the decks of ships in port—the sort of menial work that most Negroes were assigned. It wasn't a career, but it was an education. For it was in the Navy that he was radicalized.

"I ran into a group of young men who, as it turned out, were the intellectuals in our crowd—Pullman-car porters, college graduates," Belafonte says. He mostly sat and listened until one of them handed him "Color and Democracy," by W. E. B. Du Bois. Belafonte struggled with the words, spending hours poring over a single paragraph. He recalls, "I discovered that at the end of some sentences there was a number, and if you looked at the foot of the page the reference was to what it was all about—what source Du Bois gleaned this information from. So when I was on leave, going into Chicago, I went to a library with a long list of books. The librarian said, 'That's too many, young man. You're going to have to cut it down.' I said, 'I can make it very easy. Just give me everything you got by Ibid.' She said, 'There's no such writer.' I called her a racist. I said, 'Are you trying to keep me in darkness?' And I walked out of there angry."

In the Navy, stationed near Newport News, Virginia, in 1944, he met Marguerite Byrd, a campus beauty at the nearby Hampton Institute. They were an odd couple from the start. Marguerite was a sorority sister and a class officer, from a middle-class family in Washington, D.C. She had grown up in the insular comfort of the black bourgeois world, segregated but secure; her perspective on racial politics couldn't have contrasted more strongly. She later recalled, "Our courtship was one long argument over racial issues."

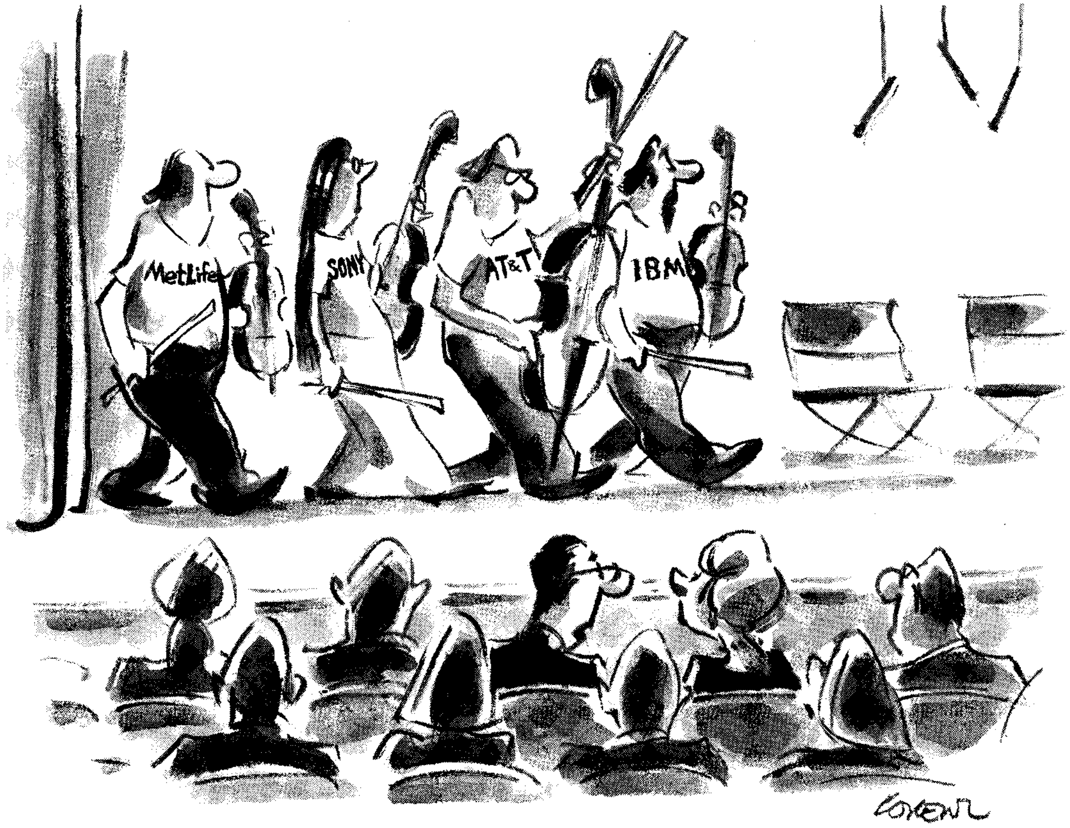
And Belafonte really was, by all accounts, an angry young man out of a juvie-menace flick. For instance, he was given to defacing subway posters that annoyed him—like one for a skin lotion that promised to preserve the soft white beauty of your hands. "What about *Negro* hands?" the young Belafonte scrawled in pencil. Marguerite has said, "He reminded me of a big kid who was about to get into trouble if somebody didn't watch and help him. I had to keep him from becoming a delinquent." They were married in June, 1948, and their first child, Adrienne, was born the following year.

Shortly after leaving the Navy, Belafonte saw a play at the American Negro Theatre, in Harlem, and decided that he had glimpsed his destiny. He joined the A.N.T., initially working backstage, and there he and another aspiring actor, Sidney Poitier, began their nearly fifty-year friendship. From the beginning, it was a complicated relationship—compounded of affection, admiration, and rivalry. "Harry was then very competitive and I was then very competitive," Poitier says. "Harry Belafonte is today very competitive and Sidney Poitier is today very competitive. And then there was the fact that we were eligible for pretty much the same kind of parts."

Belafonte made his stage début as the juvenile lead in an A.N.T. production of "Juno and the Paycock"; parts in other plays followed. Paul Robeson was in the audience at one of those performances, and told him afterward, "Job well done, young man." Belafonte felt anointed. Poitier says, "I remember times when he and I would meet Robeson in a bar on Fifth Avenue just off a Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, and sit there and talk. He was very fond of Harry. And Harry loved him."

These were tough times for Belafonte and Poitier both; and they were better at concocting schemes to get rich quick than at making ends meet. Poitier still remembers a plan to bottle and sell an extract of conch, a shellfish that, in the Caribbean, anyway, was reputed to be an aphrodisiac. At another point, the two decided that their fortune lay in standup comedy, and they spent weeks practicing routines that they'd perform as the comic duo Belafonte & Poitier, until they figured out that their routine was about as effective as their aphrodisiac.

In 1948, Belafonte was performing in an A.N.T. production of a play called "Days of Our Youth," with Poitier serving as his understudy. Belafonte had a job as a janitor's assistant, bagging garbage, but he paid someone else to cover for him during his evening performances. "This particular night, the person who was covering for me couldn't do it, and I had to go take care of the garbage," he recalls. "That was the



"*At least they're not swilling at the public trough.*"

night Sidney Poitier went on for me. That was also the night some people from downtown were coming up to look at casting an all-black show of 'Lysistrata.' So Sidney got the job, which led to his being cast opposite Richard Widmark in the film 'No Way Out'—and on from there." As a result, Belafonte has long joked that Poitier's career is "based on garbage." His daughter Shari Belafonte-Harper sees it as a joke with dimensions: "They've been best friends forever, but—and I'm being a junior psychologist here—Daddy has never forgiven Sidney for stealing his career."

BELAFONTE'S break came when a friend coaxed him into appearing on amateur night at the Royal Roost jazz tavern, and he ended up landing a full-time gig. He'd done some singing in a musical once, but singing had never been a consuming passion. Still, a job was a job. He started as a jazz singer but soon switched to a pop repertoire—songs like "Lean on Me," "Pennies from Heaven," and one of his own composition, entitled "Recognition." In clubs, he was billed as the Gob with a Throb, and for his act he sat on a stool wearing a dinner jacket and a St. Christopher medal. Jack Rollins, who was soon to be his manager, describes his routine in those days as a "vanilla imitation of Billy Eckstine." "That's probably a fair description," Belafonte admits.

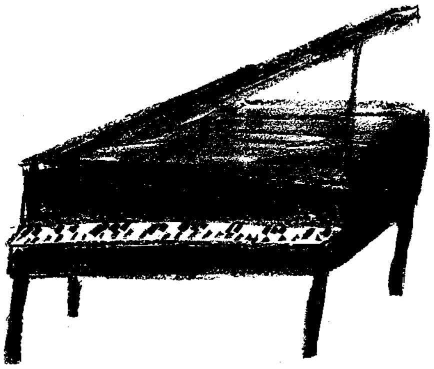
In 1950, Belafonte, with two friends, opened a hamburger joint in the Village, called the Sage; it lasted all of eight months, but it did provide him with rehearsal space to work after hours on his new act—as a folksinger. Certainly folk music was in the air: the jukebox at the Sage played Burl Ives, Josh White, and the Weavers. And this was a musical genre that somehow resonated with his political sensibilities. "People see Harry as the Adonis—sensual and sexy, and all that," Poitier points out. "But when the same remarkable presence was singing ballads they did not electrify the world. He wanted what he believed to be a part of his work. That's what took him to folksinging. The whole history of black people was in the texture of folksinging." To the usual folk repertoire Belafonte added a particular emphasis on West Indian folk songs.

The larger cultural milieu was changing in auspicious ways, too. Imprinted on Belafonte's memory to this day is a photograph he saw in the April 24, 1950, issue of *Life*, which showed Billy Eckstine being embraced by a white woman. "Nat King Cole, who was one of the greatest singers in pop culture, didn't quite make it across the line, because of his physical cut, his fully Afrocentric being," Belafonte says matter-of-factly. "Billy Eckstine—light-skinned, gloriously good-looking, suave—just had people swooning all over the place. And when that photo hit, in this national publication, it was as if a barrier had been broken."

In 1951, another light-skinned, gloriously good-looking, suave crooner presented his new act as a folksinger at Max Gordon's already legendary Village Vanguard. His folk songs—"John Henry," "A Man Ain't Nothing but a Man" "Mark Twain," "Hold 'Em Joe"—were interspersed with songs that had something of an island lilt, like "Venezuela Matilda" and "Coconut Woman." As his following grew—and it rapidly did—he moved uptown to the posher Blue Angel, another Max Gordon venue, where he met with even greater success. Before long, he found himself booked at the upper echelon of night clubs and hotels across the country, and under contract as a recording artist at RCA. If being a singer had never been one of Belafonte's dreams, the world clearly had its own plans for him.

These were years that mixed exhilaration with humiliation: the bigger he got, the harder it was for him to ignore the petty indignities of Jim Crow. The exhilarating part was, for instance, being booked to play the swanky Thunderbird Hotel, in Las Vegas. The humiliating part was then being forced to sleep in a Negro boarding house on the outskirts of town, and denied use of any of the hotel's facilities.

In 1953, enjoying his first real taste of affluence, Belafonte moved from Washington Heights into a white neighborhood in Elmhurst, Queens. "Right when we moved in," Margurite recalls, "you suddenly saw a number of 'For Sale' signs appearing." One day soon afterward, Adrienne, who was then four, announced, "Mother, we've got to move! There are Niggeroes moving into the neighborhood." It seemed that one of her playmates had confusedly let her in on the neighborhood anxiety. "Why don't we wait to see what these Niggeroes are like?" Margurite replied.



That same year, John Murray Anderson signed Belafonte for "Almanac," his annual talent show on Broadway, and Belafonte, the only black member of the cast, wound up winning a best-performance Tony. This, in turn, earned him an appearance on the annual "musical evening" of the "Ed Sullivan Show"—which led to many more appearances. Indeed, Belafonte went on to become perhaps the most frequently heard singer on the show.

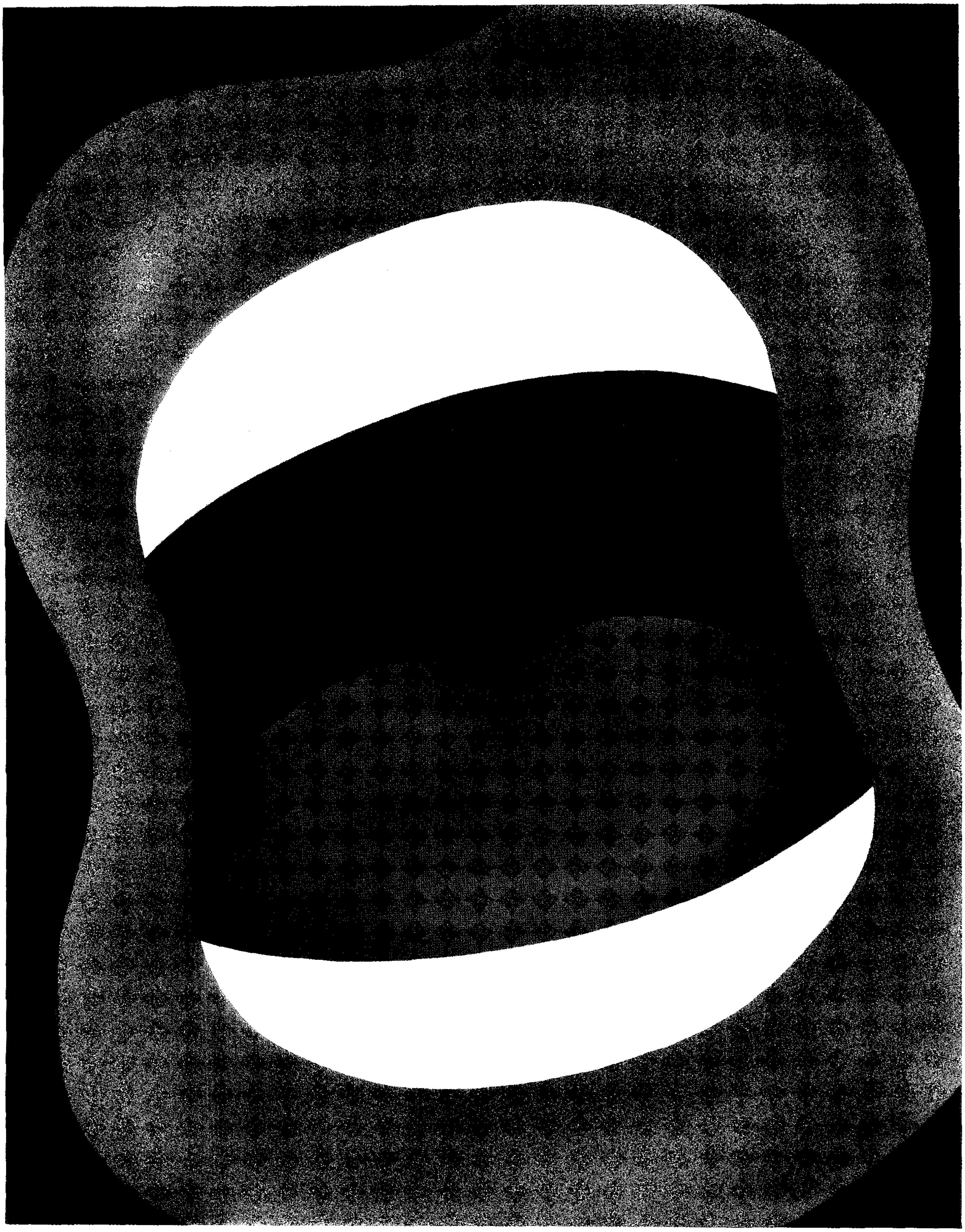
Belafonte was receiving his greatest popular exposure so far, but he was also—and not for the last time, either—experiencing the bitterness of being shunned by his own people. "A lot of people on the left turned against me, because they thought there was no way I could get on the Sullivan show if I hadn't talked to the Committee, or whatnot. I had to live for a long time with the pain of rejection from people who were in the same camp." As I have learned, there are a number of people around who still harbor such suspicions. (Even Paul Robeson, Jr., the son of Belafonte's great hero, says, "I just have to leave it as an open question.") Poitier, though, says, "Harry escaped Robeson's fate partly because Robeson paid the dues. They crucified him—and the black community knew it, the white liberal community knew it. It stained an awful lot of hands."

WHAT really changed Belafonte's life was the 1954 film "Carmen Jones"—adapted from Mike Todd's all-black version of Bizet's opera—in which Belafonte played the dashing young Army officer whose romance with Carmen Jones (Dorothy Dandridge) proves fatal. Not all the critics were impressed, but for many black viewers, in particular, the performances were electrifying, and remain so. "It was incredibly evocative and very sexy, and it was two of the physically most beautiful human beings on the planet," the theatre director George Wolfe says.

During this time, Belafonte's marriage to Margurite was disintegrating. Margurite, who had done graduate work at the Sorbonne and the University of Heidelberg and was soon to earn a Ph.D. in psychology, found herself temperamentally at odds with the milieu in which Belafonte travelled. "I just found the show-biz world to be shallow, and false," she recalls. "And, more and more, that was his whole

SKETCHBOOK BY IAN FALCONER

AN OPENING AT THE MET



"Let's run through it again. They're not budging."

life." (Their daughter Adrienne observes, "Mom had the drive and focus of many black contemporaries. She came from a family that was striving to be in the upper echelon of black society, which then moves you into the middle echelon of white society. For Dad, it was about changing all of society.")

Then, during the filming of "Carmen Jones," Belafonte met a dancer named Julie Robinson, and things soon grew serious. Robinson, who had been dating Marlon Brando, had the distinction of being the only white dancer in the Katherine Dunham Company. Though she was of Russian-Jewish ancestry, she knew a lot more about African and African-American folk culture than Belafonte did: she had attended the Little Red School House, in the Village, and was involved with the N.A.A.C.P. In short, she was a thoroughly modern bohemian. Margurite, soon after giving birth to Shari, in 1954, discovered a cache of love letters that Julie Robinson had written to her husband. The Belafontes separated soon thereafter. (More acrimonious was Belafonte's breakup with his manager, Jack Rollins, around the same time. Rollins went on to become a high-profile agent and producer, but he remains bitter. "You look at this guy, and some people might say he's a credit to his race," Rollins says now. "The guy's a bum!")

In the winter of 1957, following the shooting of his next film, "Island in the Sun," Belafonte managed to conceal two legal events: his divorce from Margurite and his subsequent marriage to Julie Robinson. Alas, news of his revised marital status leaked out shortly before the new film was released. "Island in the Sun" itself provoked controversy, with its story of an interracial love affair between characters played by Belafonte and his co-star, Joan Fontaine. (In fact, a bill was introduced in the South Carolina legislature proposing to fine any theatre that showed the film.) But many blacks felt equally troubled by the developments in Belafonte's personal life. In the spring of 1957, the *Amsterdam News* ran the headline "BELAFONTE WEDS WHITE DANCER," and the paper cited in its story a saying from the twenties: "Give a Negro man fame and fortune, and he's got to have a white woman, a Packard car, and a bulldog." Readers were further informed that "Belafonte's popularity with his own race is hanging in the balance at the moment." That wasn't the wild hyperbole it may seem. In the late fifties, Eartha Kitt said, "I am not sure that Harry has completely healed the breach." She went on, "This is something that no Negro performer can afford. It has to play havoc with him inside."

What made the issue of particular moment was the fact that by 1957 Harry Belafonte had emerged as perhaps the country's most popular performer. The album "Harry Belafonte—Calypso," released at the end of 1956, ended up selling more than a million and a half copies, more than any single-artist album ever had before, and it remained on the charts for a year and a half. Elvis and Sinatra were big in 1957, yet Belafonte—the King of Calypso, as he was touted—outsold both of them. (With fetching modesty, Belafonte told one reporter, "I don't want to be known as the guy who put the nail in the coffin of rock and roll.")

Belafonte had plenty of help, to be sure. "Listen to his voice without looking at him, and it is clear that his sound is not a sexy one, as the sound of Sinatra, of Nat Cole, and even of Billy Daniels, are sexy," the music executive Arnold Shaw wrote in 1960. "What Harry sounds like and what he looks like are not the same thing." So what he looked like was crucial, and his managers worked hard on sexing up his image: putting him in tight, form-fitting mohair pants, and colorful silk shirts that opened nearly to his navel. The King of Calypso also had a lot of help from his court—including the Juilliard-educated musician and songwriter Irving Burgie—or Lord Burgess, as he called himself, calypso style—who helped write or arrange most of the songs on the "Calypso" album.

The Belafonte craze swept the country. Claims adjusters in Tucson, driving to work in their white Hudsons, chorused along with their radios, "Daylight come and me wan' go home," at least when they weren't worrying about having "left a little girl in Kingston-town." Pete Seeger explains, " 'Day-O'—it's something that just makes you feel like taking a lungful of air and singing. A lot of people who never thought of themselves as singers could sing it."

In fact, to purists the problem with Belafonte was that he was too much of a singer, and not a calypsonian at all. As Daisann McLane, a calypso scholar—and singer—points out, *echt*-calypso is less about crooning than about percussion: "You don't necessarily have to be on key, but you do have to be on time." The King of Calypso title caused outrage for other reasons, too. Calypso—which had enjoyed brief spells of popularity in this country in the thirties (largely due to Rudy Vallee's radio show) and again in the forties—is a distinctively Trinidadian tradition; its French and Yoruba influences reflect the peculiar history of the island's settlement. In Trinidad, where calypsonians had long since formed something like a trade guild, a king of calypso was determined during an annual carnival known as the Calypso War: the calypsonian who most inventively insults his competitors wins the title. So Trinidadian calypso, which was traditionally extemporized, and which zestfully blended political protest and personal invective, was thus a far different creature from what usually passed under that name in the United States. As for what Belafonte brought in the guise of calypso, McLane says, "I would call it calypso with a conk."

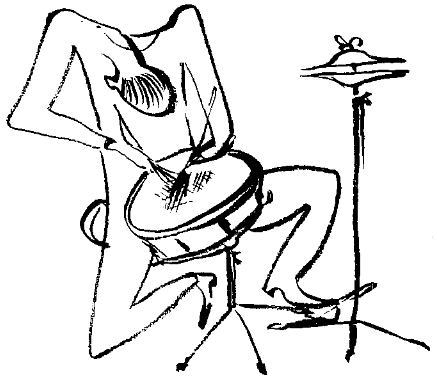
Belafonte is unapologetic. "There were great calypsonians who could never see the light of day in this country, because they were so distanced from this culture. Now I came along and I modified the dialect, I put it into a rhythm that was more closely identified with the American scene. If, instead, I came in and sang this stuff with a thick Jamaican accent, it would have been like listening to Italian opera."

He recalls a press conference where a Trinidadian journalist berated him for styling himself King of Calypso when he had never been to Trinidad and had no contact with its traditions. Belafonte replied that he had no control over how his record label promoted him, and conceded that he wasn't really a calypso singer. "And then I said, 'I'll tell you, though, that I find that most of the culture coming out of Trinidad among calypso singers is not in the best interests of the people of the Caribbean community. I think that it's racist, because you sing to our own denunciation on color. You sing about our sexual power, and our gift of drinking, and rape, and all the things we do to which I have, and want, no particular claim. What I have sought to do with my art is take my understanding of the region and put it before people in a positive way. And doing these songs gives people another impression than the mythology they have that we're all lazy, living out of a banana tree, fucking each other to death.'"

But then Belafonte was never going to get any benedictions from the keepers of the *Volksgeist*. The mighty Odetta says, "There were lots of times when the folky-poos, as I call them, loved some particular singer, until his records became popular, and then all of a sudden they decided he wasn't a folksinger anymore. It depended on what they thought the bank account was. Isn't that pitiful?" By that yardstick, too, Belafonte was handily disqualified.

BELAFONTE had known the worship of strangers since his mid-twenties; but it was in 1957 that he experienced for the first time what Leo Braudy calls the "frenzy of renown." Each week brought more articles in newspapers and magazines, biographical sketches in *Life* and *Time* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. And this declaration from *Look:* "Singer-actor Harry Belafonte, one of the most acclaimed entertainers in America today, has also become the first Negro matinee idol in our entertainment history." That he succeeded where so many others failed was, in the eyes of some, no real mystery. Belafonte's friend and collaborator Bill Attaway observed, in the late fifties, "At the present stage of the struggle for human freedom, the need is for a bridge Negro—one who serves to connect white and Negro. Harry fills that need remarkably. Although he is brown-skinned and unmistakably Negro, he is acceptable in terms of white standards of beauty. Brown up Tab Hunter and you could hardly tell him from Harry Belafonte."

The status of bridge Negro did not sit very well with Belafonte, who wanted to be adored as much as the next man, but whose political sensibilities were in rebellion against the terms of that adoration. Nevertheless, he concedes, "I think the whole thing came in a package that was quite comfortable—attractive, articulate. With all my passion, I've never driven people to extremes. And what they loved so much was 'Banana Boat' and 'Jamaica Farewell,' and all that stuff."



Belafonte recalls that at about that time Otto Preminger wanted to cast him in a film version of "Porgy and Bess." He found the script racially offensive—a romance between a druggie and a whore, wasn't it? "A host of people in the black community said no. The one who broke the chain was Sidney, who agreed to do it." In the event, the movie didn't do much business when it came out, in 1960, and it was roundly criticized in the black press. But a pattern was established. Belafonte's disenchantment with Hollywood grew. Over the next decade, his friend Poitier made seventeen major motion pictures; Belafonte made exactly none.

For one thing, the scripts he was offered appalled him. He mentions a couple of movies that he turned down. "One was a film called 'To Sir, with Love.'"

"You turned that down?" I'm aghast.

"Oh, shit, yeah. And also 'Lilies of the Field.'"

This, of course, was the 1963 film that established Poitier as a significant presence in postwar cinema: noble, selfless, saintly. When I saw it, at thirteen, I was moved to tears. It was the perfect civil-rights vehicle for its moment. Its message to white America was practically telegraphed: We are a friendly and kind-hearted people; we are good citizens.

Belafonte had another take on it. "When I read 'Lilies of the Field,' I was furious. You've got these nuns fleeing Communism, and out of nowhere is this black person who throws himself wholeheartedly into their service, saying nothing, and doing nothing except being commanded by these Nazi nuns? He didn't kiss anybody, he didn't touch anybody, he had no culture, he had no history, he had no family, he had nothing. I just said, 'No, I don't want to play pictures like that.' What happened was that Sidney stepped in—and got the Academy Award."

Which was just typical, according to Belafonte. "In the early days, Sidney participated in left affairs, but once he became anointed he gave it up," he says, without bitterness. "Sidney was always more pliable, more accommodating. He handpicked each one of those pictures to continue to exercise that beauty and make sure that he never, ever disturbed the white psyche in anything he did. Not once. Not in public utterance or in private utterance." In the meantime, Belafonte says, "I put script after script before people who just rejected them out of hand, and I just said there's no point in trying to change this monster. They would not listen to my gods." In the end, Belafonte decided that "Hollywood was symptomatic, and the problem was the nation: I figured unless you change the national vocabulary, the national climate, the national attitude, you're not going to be able to change Hollywood."

BELAFONTE'S involvement with the civil-rights movement in the sixties was no parlor project, and his friendship with King was no celebrity air kiss, either. Belafonte first met King in 1956, during the Montgomery bus boycotts. Though the black clergy's betrayals of Du Bois and Robeson had left him skeptical of the breed, King won him over by his humility and his earnestness. "I need your help," King told him. "I have no idea where this movement is going." An alliance was forged that lasted until King's death. King was a frequent guest of Belafonte's in New York, and Belafonte was one of the few who could serve as trusted conduits between King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, on the one hand, and the Washington establishment, on the other. He put up the seed money to support the newly founded Student Nonviolent Coördinating Committee. He financed a group that included Fannie Lou Hamer, Julian Bond, Bob Moses, Jim Foreman, and John Lewis to tour Africa and establish international liaisons there. It was Belafonte who bailed King out of the Birmingham jail, and who raised money to bail out a number of jailed student activists. Belafonte can be oddly reticent at times, and, though he's obviously proud of the role he played in the civil-rights era, he speaks of these matters with some hesitancy. King's widow, Coretta Scott King, is more forthcoming. She recalls a day in the early sixties when Belafonte told King, laughing, "Martin, one of these days some of these crackers are going to kill you, and I'm going to end up having to take care of your family." Both things came to pass, Belafonte having insured King's life heavily for his family's sake. Mrs. King describes him as a member of King's small "strategy committee," a trusted adviser as well as one of the few effective fund-raisers in the movement; and in moments of crisis Belafonte's friendship with Robert Kennedy, then Attorney General, proved invaluable.

Meanwhile, Belafonte held on to his day job, continuing to tour and make television appearances. But TV had its vexations for him, too. In 1960, for example, he received an Emmy for a television special he did for the "Revlon Hour," called "Tonight with Belafonte." Since the show was also a hit with viewers, Revlon decided that it was on to a good thing. According to Belafonte, an agreement was reached in which he would be given a million dollars to produce and serve as host of five shows. The second show, featuring black and white luminaries from jazz, folk, and pop, earned raves. Then he was brought up short by reality.

"Now I get called by Charlie Revson to have a meeting," he told me. "Would I come alone? I can't wait—I'm figuring he wants to give me half the company, or something. So we're having lunch in his private dining room, and he's saying, 'As a Jew in Jersey City, I understand oppression'—da, da, da, da—'but we have to talk about the show. Good ratings. Good reviews. Very nice. But we're getting some response that says you should do it all-black. If you could just take all the white people out . . .' I couldn't believe it. And I said, 'Mr. Revson, let me tell you something. If you'd asked me to put on a flowery shirt and sing more calypso tunes, and dance more, because that's what white people would like, I would consider it. But what you've asked me to do—there's no way to square it. I cannot become resegregated.' He said, 'O.K.' Four o'clock that afternoon, I had a check for eight hundred thousand dollars. Charlie Revson said, 'Goodbye. You're off the air.' "

Belafonte's first impulse, he says, was to raise a stink, but on talking it over with friends he reconsidered. Revson was just one of a number of advertisers who were looking to sponsor the occasional black entertainer. "If I blew the whistle and it became very political, they were going to run scared on black folk. People said, 'Just walk soft on this one, Harry. Don't say anything. It'll make it difficult for others.' So I didn't say anything." Seven years later, he was co-host of a TV special with Petula Clark, and at one point their hands touched. This time, when objections were raised by one of the marketing vice-presidents Belafonte did not walk softly. "I was thinking, After all the marches and protests—not this again." Belafonte told some journalist friends and was not displeased by the small ruckus that ensued.

But, if the political climate was changing in ways that were congenial to him, racial aesthetics were changing in ways that were less clearly advantageous. In 1967, Sidney Poitier was Hollywood's largest-grossing matinée star ("In the Heat of the Night," "To Sir with Love," and "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" all having been released that year), and this happenstance was not lost on his friend. "From a Hollywood perspective, ironically, Sidney cut the mustard more than I did in terms of appearance," Belafonte says. "They were looking for somebody who was truly African in his heritage line. He certainly reflected that more than I." So Belafonte had been caught in what amounted to a temporal double bind: in earlier years, the material was too tame to suit his sense of amour propre; in later years, the Tab Hunter-with-a-tan look wasn't providing the racial frisson that filmmakers, and audiences, were seeking.

As we sit in what Belafonte refers to as the Red Room of his West End Avenue apartment, he tells me about a recent countrywide tour. Hunched slightly forward on a nine-foot damask sofa, he sounds depleted. "I'm going to tell you, man," he says. "I never saw so many white people in my life."

Neither had I. Belafonte's road show today consists of the standards he has sung for forty years, which he performs in a colorful silk shirt before a cardboard set of palm trees. When I caught up with him in Minneapolis, I saw a sold-out auditorium—the audience, from the looks of it, consisting of the same people who had bought his albums back in the fifties. But they loved him still. Onstage, he radiated energy and charisma, and you could see what it was that made him keep at it: the ovation was tremendous. It's also true that I was practically the only black person in the house. But then what was I expecting? Banjee boys in gold-fronts and skullies? Besides, it *was* Minneapolis.

Belafonte now says, sadly, "Let me tell you something. I don't know of any artist at my level who has ever been as much on the line for black liberation as I have and has as few black people in attendance at anything that he does as I do."

"That must hurt," I venture.

"Oh, I've layered it over so heavily it's stopped hurting now," he says, and for a moment I almost believe him. Then he shrugs. "Even before, because of my social and political position, most black people distanced themselves from me," he says. "Because I'm a tough package. In California, I walked into a place and somebody said, 'Here comes Mr. Conscience,' and all the cocaine left the room—you know? On the other hand, there's always been that noise and roar, and that approval I think in many ways saved me. Because, whether it was out of envy or jealousy or just plain fear, there was always that— I've always been out of the loop. I didn't grow up in the church, I didn't grow up in Mississippi, I didn't come out of the blues valleys of the Mississippi Delta. But most black Americans don't support anybody." And he cites such international performing artists as Miriam Makeba and Milton Nascimento. "There's a handful of people in the end who respect you and know you, but that's it. No black American artist has ever got the support of black America." I suppose he is overstating the case, but I know what he means. Belafonte goes on, "So there was some comfort in the fact that I was in a crowd."

Later, Sidney Poitier reflects on the vagaries of crossover success. "Let me tell you something," he says heavily. "We both suffer from that a lot. That kind of success is a bitch."

LONGEVITY is one advantage that the career of the activist has over that of the entertainer, and in the last couple of decades Belafonte has devoted most of his energies to charitable organizations, among them UNICEF; indeed, it was Belafonte who conceived the idea of "We Are the World," the 1985 concert and recording that raised a hundred million dollars for famine relief in Ethiopia. Of course, for his own children, and now grandchildren, the competition for his attention could be something of a strain. Adrienne—who, like all her siblings, speaks of him with doting candor—says, "The family calls him 'As Soon As.' You know—'I'll come see you as soon as I get back from South Africa, Europe, the West Coast, etc. I'll call you as soon as I get off the phone with Bishop Tutu, Sidney, the President . . .' " Still, I'm impressed with the way he's kept things together. Julie and Marguerite have become good friends, and the children of Belafonte's second marriage, David and Gina, are genuinely close to those of his first.

Belafonte has also been a force to be reckoned with behind the camera: he spent much of the eighties as a producer, trying to package a television miniseries that would narrate the history of apartheid in South Africa. It would have been a perfect project for him, uniting his interest in narrative filmmaking with his interests in global politics and social justice. Instead, it ended one friendship and strained another. First, he got in a dispute with Bill Cosby over who had the rights to the Nelson Mandela story. Evidently, Winnie Mandela had signed over exclusive rights to each of them in turn, though Belafonte viewed his rights as prior and preëmptive. "So I called Bill, and he said, 'My wife has the rights, and you have to deal with her.' And his wife and I had never got on particularly well. After several frustrating attempts to work this out, I said to him, 'Look, it's a legal matter, and I have the rights. We have to work this out, and if we don't we'll have to turn it over to our lawyers.' And Cosby said, 'Well, call your best shot.' So I did. Shortly after that, his people backed down."

What particularly galled Belafonte was that "The Cosby Show" was a top-rated television show in apartheid South Africa, despite the cultural boycott of that country. Compounding the insult was the fact that Cosby had subsequently been asked to join the board of TransAfrica, an organization that Belafonte had helped found and had long supported. "I went to a board meeting one day, and they said, 'Bill Cosby's coming on board.' And I said, 'Wait a minute. Where's your integrity?' Here was a major violator of the boycott. Well, they smelled money, they smelled power. I said, 'Fine. I resign.' And Bill and I have had no exchanges since then. We see each other in public places

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and we give each other the nod. But the line is drawn."

Finally, after Belafonte secured backing and lined up a director and a cast, Sidney Poitier, who had long been slated to play Mandela, backed out, explaining that he had script problems, and had been offered another Mandela project, which he preferred. "So that killed it," Belafonte says. "I reported it to the network, and they said, 'Well, the game's over.' "

Poitier says flatly, "Of course he had to have been disappointed. But Harry knows and accepts that there have not been and never will be any artistic favors done between us. It can't happen."

"I guess sometime this fall it will come out," Belafonte says of Poitier's film, "and I can't wait to see it—to see what he crucified us to get."

This sort of skirmishing is far from straightforward, largely because Poitier and Belafonte really are like brothers, with all the conflict and ambivalence that usually exists between brothers. When Belafonte explains why he won't live in Hollywood, for example, he cites the conflict between his ideals and the dominant ethos of the place, and adds, "That couldn't have been described more clearly than in my relationship with Sidney. Sidney just picked and chose when he wanted me to come to dinner. He still does it now. Even if I'm a guest in his house, there are some things he just will not invite me to—situations where he feels it will just make it uncomfortable for the people he's going to be with." Then he half relents: "It's O.K. I let him live in his comfort zone."

Shari Belafonte elaborates: "You see where Sidney's career has gone in terms of film, which is what Dad always wanted to do. And then you see where Dad's career has gone. It's one thing to have enormous success. It's another thing to be enormously successful in something you *want* to be enormously successful in." For her, the reason isn't far to seek. "I don't think Dad was a very good actor," she says bluntly. She thinks he had moments in the two Poitier-directed farces he did in the early seventies, "Buck and the Preacher" and "Uptown Saturday Night," but "they were all caricature and he was hiding behind them—'acting,' as opposed to just being," she says. "And I think that now—he's soon to be seventy—he is getting to be comfortable in his own skin. And also Gina worked hard and it shows. I think he is getting better now."

Certainly Belafonte's performance in "Kansas City"—as a garrulous gangster known as Seldom Seen—has been heralded as a real turnaround in an acting career that has had few high points since the fifties; and he gives a lot of the credit to the coaching he received from Gina Belafonte, his and Julie's younger child. "Mainly, he wrote the lines," Altman says. "When I sent him the script, after we'd talked about him playing Seldom Seen, there were no lines in it. And he said, 'What kind of part is this?' I said, 'The one thing about you, Harry, I know, is the thing you're best at is talking.' " The two have since become close; indeed, Bob and Kathryn Altman are now frequent dinner guests of the Belafontes—part of a group of friends that includes Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson and (since they moved their primary residence to Manhattan, two years ago) Sidney and Joanna Poitier.

When Altman first proposed that Belafonte should play the role of a cold-blooded villain, though, he winced. "I said, 'That's a lot of pressure. I can play a leading-man type. Give me a horse and a gun—I can get away with that. But this is serious business.' A few drinks later, Altman says to me, 'I need to ask you something. Who started that rumor that you're an actor?' " The point was taken. Besides, if Belafonte were truly protective of his image he wouldn't have become involved in Altman's latest project, "Amos 'n' Andy."

THE other week, I got an excited phone call from Belafonte, who was on tour in Monte Carlo. "I talked to Altman. The project is a go!" he said. Then he laughed. "People are going to say, 'Amos 'n' Andy'? What the fuck is Harry Belafonte doin' with that?' "

"Amos 'n' Andy"—an all-black show about an inveterate schemer and his perpetual dupe—was once among the most popular shows in the country, first on radio, then on television. In the early fifties, however, the program was cancelled, following protests from civil-rights organizations, which found its depiction of black people demeaning. "I think that was the right thing to do at the time," says Belafonte, who joined in that protest. But Altman persuaded him that the time had come to take another look at the show and its history.

Actually, what fascinated Altman most was the story behind "Amos 'n' Andy"—the story of its originators, two black comedians, named Aubrey Lyles and Flournoy Miller, who themselves had to don blackface, minstrel style, to entertain audiences both black and white. There's no script yet, but the idea is to interweave an "Amos 'n' Andy" narrative with the earlier story of the historical creation of "Amos 'n' Andy"—a story, in part, of exploitation, as white producers took the show away from its creators in the process of bringing it before a mass audience.

"When he told me about wanting to do 'Amos 'n' Andy,' he said it was because he saw in it not only a hell of a piece of drama but a metaphor of human existence, especially as American culture is defined by him," Belafonte explains. "Everybody lives an 'Amos 'n' Andy' existence, and not just the racial connotation that we have suffered: it is the façade that we put on every day in order to advance our ambitions. We're all living out these little plays every day in order to advance our interests."

Belafonte's association (presumably as a producer) will be no vaccine against controversy; the complexity of Altman's sensibility will have to suffice. But Belafonte says, "If we can successfully crack the back of telling that story, I think we'll have launched into the most troublesome subject in American culture, and that is the issue of race."

These days, of course, Americans are disposed to react to talk of racism the way you might to a discussion of one of those now banned artificial sweeteners: Cyclamates, cyclamates—didn't we already *do* something about that? And as for Harry Belafonte's perorations about social injustice, didn't that kind of talk go out with—well, with Harry Belafonte? But that's the thing: he's still here.

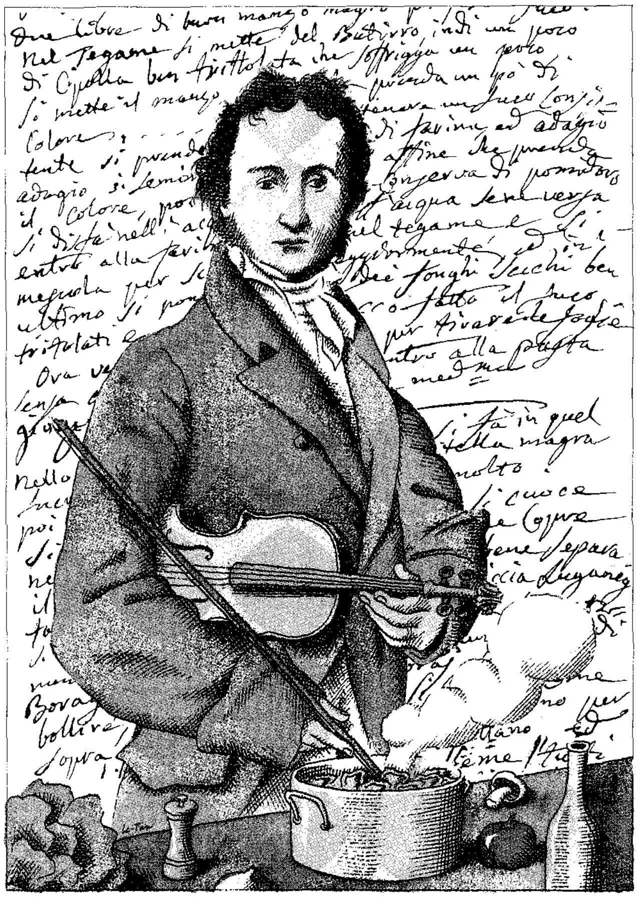
A cultural punishment is exacted from those lucky few to whom it has been given to embody the Zeitgeist: in the fullness of time, they become ridiculous. The former idol now headlining in second-string venues, cheesily reprising the smash hits of yesteryear, is uniquely a figure of bathos: the has-been can seem absurd in a way that the never-was doesn't. Unlike Engelbert Humperdinck, say, Belafonte has largely escaped that fate: his road show may verge on camp, but it doesn't cross over. In the funniest scene in Tim Burton's 1988 movie "Beetlejuice," a malevolent ghost compels the members of a straitlaced dinner party to perform "The Banana Boat Song." Against their will, they find themselves dancing to a Caribbean beat and belting out "Day-O!" But the impression you're left with isn't how silly the song was but how bewitchingly catchy it still is: even without any supernatural agency, you find yourself wanting to join in the chorus.

BELAFONTE'S daughter Adrienne told me, "One of my father's songs has a line about 'A secret soldier with pieces inside broke,' and that's how I see him. He wants to fix the world, and he's sad because he sees it slipping away. I believe he feels alone." A secret soldier with pieces inside broke: I watch Harry Belafonte relax in the elegant comfort of the Red Room, amid oversized club chairs with eighteenth-century needlepoint pillows, a wide fireplace flanked with wrought-iron church candlesticks, and carved religious figures from Bahia and the Philippines on the mantelpiece. A restive energy emanates from him all the same: he seems both perfectly at home and somehow caged.

We're speaking about a recent cancer scare he had, the prostate surgery from which he's still mending, and the way he dealt with the usual questions raised by such reminders of mortality. "There wasn't all that much I would have done differently, when I look back on it," he muses. He's still acutely conscious of being an autodidact, and says he wishes he'd read more, learned more. I think he wishes he were loved more, too. I was struck by something a friend of his remarked decades ago, when Belafonte was a young man on top of the world: "Friends had to love him. Business associates had to love him. Relatives had to love him. And so on down the line—to children, animals, insects, and perhaps even bacteria." I was equally struck by the realization that Belafonte is one of the few mortals around to have come close to that blessed state. He stares straight ahead when he recalls the exhilaration of being shoulder to shoulder with Dr. King, and the "onrush of love" he felt from civil-rights marchers when he'd get up to speak. "Ask most black Americans," he says, "and they'll say, 'Oh, he's a standup guy. Oh, yeah, you can always count on Harry.' " He breaks off, sags a little, and sounds almost resigned when he adds, "But then don't ask them very much past that." ♦

NOTEBOOK

PAGANINI'S RAVIOLI



Nicolò Paganini's violin technique was so spectacular that some listeners sought explanations in the supernatural. Franz Liszt claimed, "They even whispered that he had dedicated his soul to the Evil One and that the fourth string of his violin was made of his wife's intestine, which he himself had cut out." When he worked his wizardry in the kitchen, however, Paganini stuck with more easily acquired ingredients, as in this recipe, written in his own hand (and incorporated in the painting above) and now in the Music Division of the Library of Congress.

FOR a pound and a half of flour, two pounds of good lean beef to make the sauce. Place in the frying pan some butter, then a small amount of finely chopped onions, and brown slightly. Put in the beef, and cook till it begins to take on a bit of color. For a thick sauce, take a few pinches of flour and gradually sprinkle them into the meat juices to brown, then take some tomato paste, dilute it with water, pour some of this mixture into the flour in the frying pan, and mix well to dissolve. Finally add some finely chopped and pounded dried mushrooms, and that's the sauce.

Now for the pasta. When rolling out sheets of eggless dough, add a little bit of salt to help with the consistency.

Now for the filling. Using the same pan as for the meat in the sauce, cook half a pound of lean veal, then remove it, chop it, and pound it. Take a calf's brain, boil it, then remove the skin covering the brain, chop and pound well; take a few cents' worth of Lugano sausage, remove the skin, chop and pound separately. Take a good pinch of borage, boil, squeeze out thoroughly, and pound as above.

Take three eggs, sufficient for a pound and a half of flour. Beat them thoroughly and add the various ingredients listed above, which should be pounded again, with a little Parmesan cheese added to the eggs. And that's the filling.

You could use a capon in place of the veal and sweetbreads in place of the brain for a more delicate filling. If the filling is hard, add some meat juice.

For ravioli, cut the pasta slightly wet and leave for an hour, covered, to give thin sheets. ♦

PIERRE LE-TAN

LETTER FROM THE ROAD

WHAT SOPHIA WANTS

How do you make it in rock and roll? Sophia Ramos is learning.

BY ALEC WILKINSON

HERE is Sophia in Iowa. That would be Sophia Ramos, twenty-six, a rock-and-roll singer from the South Bronx, a Puerto Rican, a *Latina:* sultry Sophia who sings with Psychotica, a rude and cacophonous band from New York. Psychotica represents a segment of American popular music identified as glam rock—that is, glamour rock. A lot of makeup is involved. Sophia and Psychotica have just been onstage in Des Moines at two in the afternoon, the first band appearing on the slate of big-deal bands that will shatter the clear blue air until late at night at the Iowa State Fairgrounds, under the banner of the Lollapalooza tour. Now Sophia and the band are on their way to sign copies of a CD consisting of four songs, two of them from their first album, released at the end of July. They pass (mainly) white boys and girls, the everywhere boys and girls of America, the boys and girls in Des Moines who look exactly like the boys and girls in Los Angeles and Boston and Natchez and Cleveland and Fairbanks, because they all take their way of dressing from MTV. The everywhere boys and girls have noses and eyebrows and ears and navels pierced with pewter studs and little hoops the color of old spoons, and they have tattoos, so many tattoos, how did anyone in America ever live without four or five tattoos before? Creepy little fire-snorting dragons and dripping daggers and tombstones and wizard figures with blazing-red eyes, so many tattoos that the everywhere boys and girls look like comic strips walking, it's quite beautiful in its way, a sauntering pageant of cartoons. Among them strolls copper-skinned Sophia, untattooed, wearing a shiny burnt-orange nightie. You could call it a shift, but in the trailer that serves as Psychotica's dressing room, rummaging through her suitcase, she held up the shift and said, "Shall I wear the nightie?" and Patrick Briggs, Psychotica's lead singer, who performs in a skintight silver jumpsuit, which constricts in the heat and makes him feel like a sausage in its casing—"It's good, though," he says, "because it makes me really irritated and angry before I go on"—and who sometimes stands onstage with his arms at his sides and looks from the audience like a pair of tweezers, said, "Sure."

On this blistering day of sullen farm heat, the needle on a thermometer worn on a string around the neck of a white boy like a piece of jewelry reads a hundred degrees. The expressions on the faces of the everywhere kids are flat and abstracted, as if they had just been yelled at. The band they're listening to is playing so loud that the sound stirs the surface of a glass of water on a table in a room a hundred yards from the stage. Three white boys wearing shorts and no shirts stop Sophia, and one of them asks for an autograph. He extends his arm and Sophia writes with a black felt-tip marker on his biceps.

Sophia is double-jobbing with Psychotica. She does not appear on its album. The young woman who does left the band, and Patrick, whom Sophia knew because both had spent years on the same sweaty circuit of clubs in New York, asked Sophia to take her place for the tour. When Sophia signs a copy of Psychotica's CD, she does not sign her name, she signs "Sophia's Toy," the name of her sinuous, stage-demolishing band in New York. By appearing across the country with Psychotica and by signing "Sophia's Toy" on hundreds, if not thousands, of CD covers and concert programs and scraps of paper, she hopes that she will make an impression that will help her when her band has a record of its own.

Sophia is small and compact—"I don't have that long-legged thing," she says. She has a narrow face, with a strong, dimpled chin; she has a long, finely drawn nose, shapely lips, and dark eyes; and she has thick black hair curled as tightly as springs. She favors, gratuitously, pushup bras. "I don't know why, really," she says, "but I don't wear makeup, except sometimes onstage, so I have to do something for effect." A man who sees Sophia onstage, strutting in a leather bustier and tiny shorts, one hand gripping her crotch, her head bobbing back and forth, and her tongue making snaky movements through her lips, is likely to conclude that she is more serious and strenuous fun than he feels comfortable with. In private, however, Sophia is reserved and a little bit shy.

As Sophia stands under the open furnace of the Iowa sky, a slight breeze lifts the hem of her nightie. The Iowa boy who has asked for her autograph turns to his friends and raises his eyebrows in a hubba-hubba manner. On his arm, in indelible ink, Sophia writes, "Pussy Power, Sophia's Toy." The boy reads the inscription, looks at her, looks at his friends, and backs up. Sophia walks. Between her and the boys, the shoulders of the everywhere kids come together like closing doors.

SOPHIA formed Sophia's Toy in 1992. Before that, for four years, she sang (regrettably, she feels) with a club band in New York called The Crunge, and before that, when she was seventeen, she and the singer Michelle Shocked had an act called the Brolk Sisters, named for a combination of "broke" and "folk." After The Crunge, Sophia resolved that her next band would include the best musicians she could find. She wanted, she says, a band that would "leave holes in the stage." The obstacle was persuading accomplished musicians who would probably be older than she was to work

Ramos performing with her band, Sophia's Toy: "I didn't want anyone taking over my project." Photograph by Chris Callis.

with an unknown singer. "I didn't want anyone taking over my project," she says, "so I figured I could get the best players and also maintain control if I paid them—'Here's your money, see you at the next gig,' and they couldn't give me any lip." Renting space to rehearse, paying the musicians, and sending out a mailing whenever the band played would cause her to lose money, but she hoped that eventually the musicians would regard her highly enough to give up being sidemen and share the risk that she was assuming.

To pay the band, Sophia tended bar in Chelsea at a club called Spo-dee-o-dee, now defunct. One night at Spo-dee-o-dee, she heard Michael Ciro, a guitar player, chicken-scratching with a funk band and was impressed by his abilities as a rhythm player, and the next night she heard him as a soloist with a rock band and asked if he was interested in working with her. Sophia and Ciro formed a funk-rock band called Sophia and Her Sexual Overtones and began writing songs together. What they wrote, however, wasn't suitable for the blues clubs they were playing—it was rock and roll. They decided to give up the blues clubs and instead play the music they were writing. This is when they changed the band's name.

Sophia quit bartending and began hustling work as a singer. A friend who sang with a band of Russian musicians at weddings and night clubs in Brighton Beach had a conflicting obligation one night and asked Sophia to take her place, and the Russian band liked her so much that they hired her, too. The band's repertoire included sappy American pop songs—Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey sorts of things—and Russian and Jewish folk songs, which Sophia learned from tapes that the musicians gave her. The clients at one of the clubs were mostly Russian gangsters, who dressed extravagantly ("Versace *down*," Sophia says) and spent slap-happy amounts of money on food and vodka and cognac. One of the occasional members of the band lived in New Jersey, and on nights when he played he drove Sophia home—she lives in Manhattan, on the Upper West Side, in a tiny studio with one window and a mattress on the floor. She usually arrived at her apartment around three. All other nights, she rode the subway.

In December of 1993, Sophia's Toy signed a recording contract with an established label, Epic. Sophia left the Russian wedding band. Since she is Puerto Rican, the company suggested that she sing at least one song in Spanish—advice that she found exasperating, because of its implication that her appeal is limited. Halfway through recording the album, Sophia asked the producer if he watched Spanish television. He said no, but his maid did, and she said, "Exactly."

Not long after that, in June of 1994, the executive who had signed the band invited Sophia and Michael Ciro to a breakfast, where he told them that Epic had, unhappily, decided not to release the record. "He told us that the company felt there was no market for female rock-and-roll singers," Sophia says.

For a time, she felt lost. "It opened up all these old childhood wounds about failure and being different," she says. "It made me feel that my difference—my being a woman, my being Puerto Rican—was a curse, something that was going to hold me back forever." The feeling lasted almost a year. Finally, she says, "I just accepted and embraced my difference. I came to feel that it was the very thing that makes me shine. What else could I do?"

Without a record to represent on a tour, Sophia's Toy was confined to the circuit of clubs it had been making for the last two years. Sophia went back to singing with the Russian band. "I don't really like to tell what else I do for a living," she says. "It's not cool." If you persist, she will say, "All right. I'm a jingle singer." What people call her for is scoring—that is, improvising around the score—and screams.

In the hope of leaving the club circuit behind and getting another record contract, Sophia took the job with Psychotica. The first stop on the Lollapalooza tour was Kansas City. As I stood backstage, beside her, looking at the crowd and listening to the announcer saying, "Welcome to the Lollapalooza 1996 Tour," and hearing the crowd cheer, and then the announcer saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, the passion and pageantry that is Psychotica," I said, "Are you excited?" and she said, in a way that did not imply a complaint of any kind, "I wish it was my band."

SOPHIA was born in 1969. Her mother and father came to New York from Puerto Rico; Sophia is first-generation Nuyorican. Her father was a super in the building the family lived in. He saved his money, borrowed some more, and bought a building of his own. Eventually, he sold it, and moved back to Puerto Rico. He and Sophia's mother separated when Sophia was three, and Sophia and two older sisters were brought up mainly by her mother, who, according to Sophia, was excessively strict. Except to attend school, Sophia was rarely allowed to leave the house. To have a social life, she became a Pentecostal Christian. She was six. At church, she engaged in ecstatic experiences, such as dancing in the spirit and speaking in tongues.

In school, she says, she was always very different from her classmates. Being a born-again Christian, she wore skirts. She also wore thick glasses, and although she was Puerto Rican, "I was an Afrocentric one," she says. "I mean, I had this hair. Most of the other Puerto Rican kids, they were not having me." Moreover, she didn't speak Spanish. Her mother asked Sophia and her two older sisters to speak English at home. Although Sophia speaks Spanish now, she spoke it so poorly then that the kids ridiculed her when she used it, so she gave it up.

Where Sophia is sitting while she talks about her past is in my rental car on her way from Kansas City to Des Moines. It is night. Flat, deep-blue fields and windbreak stands of trees slide past the windows. We are following Psychotica's van—its manager's condition for my taking Sophia in my car instead of her riding in the van. Sophia is slumped in the front seat. She looks tired. We will talk for an hour or so more, and then I will drop her off at a hotel on the outskirts of Des Moines where the band has stopped to ask directions to its own hotel, one of those dreary roadside places with polyester sheets and dead air and plate-glass windows you can't open. For economy,

HALF-SIZED VIOLIN

I sat in the playground where I played as a child.
The child went on playing in the sand. His hands went on
making *pat-pat*, then dig then destroy,
then *pat-pat* again.

Between the trees that little house is still standing
where the high-voltage hums and threatens.
On the iron door a skull and crossbones: another
old childhood acquaintance.

When I was nine they gave me
a half-sized violin and half-sized feelings.

Sometimes I'm still overcome by pride
and a great joy: I already know
how to dress and undress
all by myself.

—YEHUDA AMICHAI

(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Chana Bloch.*)

Sophia will share a room, as she will every night of the tour, with Enrique Tirú, a member of the band, who is a cello player. She will take a shower and get to bed late and be awakened early to ride in the van to the state fairgrounds.

Before all that, while we are still driving, she tells me that when she was a teen-ager she sometimes stayed away from home for a couple of days and that her mother almost always found her. " 'Cause why?" she says. "Because I came to her in a vision." Her mother wouldn't know the name of the person Sophia was with, but she would begin calling Sophia's friends and say that she knew where Sophia was but just didn't know the number, until one of the friends felt sufficiently uneasy to give it to her. "Finally, one day in the spring when I was sixteen, my mother had had it with me," she says. "I came home from a Van Halen concert at one in the morning, and my mom was like 'If you don't play, blah, blah, blah, by my rules, blah, blah, blah, I'm going to put you in a home.' So over the next few years I lived with my boyfriend here and there. Sometimes, for a few weeks or a month, we squatted in the East Village—no heat, but you have gas, cold water, and electricity, and you can open the oven or buy electric heaters. For a while, I had a job in a clothing store, but I didn't really have the clothes. I waitressed a little and got fired for spilling things. I rolled posters in the gift shop of the Metropolitan Museum, then I got a job in an after-school program in Brooklyn helping kids with music, which I liked a lot, but I lost it because Michelle Shocked asked me to come to Los Angeles to sing on her album, and they wouldn't give me the time off, so I quit."

THE night before Sophia left New York to join the Lollapalooza tour, Sophia's Toy played for the door with four other bands at Brownies, a dim bar in the East Village. It was supposed to be a performance like any other: the bustier, the shorts, the sass; the captivating state of happiness involved in playing electric instruments, the slightest gesture of your fingertips eclipsing the sound of everything else around you; the momentary forgetting that membership in a rock-and-roll band is frequently the equivalent of an entry-level position for a career in table busing or carpentry or furniture moving or clerical help, maybe the civil service; the anesthetic and short-lived amnesia concerning the catalogue of a musician's misfortunes (deceptive and bullying club owners; inept, corrupt, and rapacious promoters; bad food and piss-poor pay; and, in Sophia's case, being a Latina doing a mainly white-girl thing). It was supposed to be show up, play, and get paid, but it went awry. The trouble began around nine-forty-five, when the soundman approached Sophia on the sidewalk outside the club and said, "You guys go on in five minutes." Sophia had been under the impression that her band was to set up at ten-thirty. Ten-thirty was what she had printed on the nine hundred announcements she had sent out, costing her three hundred dollars, and ten-thirty was what she had told the man from Atlantic Records she'd invited to hear the band.

To the soundman Sophia said, "We were told ten-thirty. Our drummer just got here."

"I don't care what you were told," he said. "You're on the list for now."

"What's on the list is a mistake," Sophia said. "They told us to be ready at ten-thirty."

"I got five bands," the soundman said, "and I can't keep running the show back. The stage has been clear for ten minutes." Sophia stood in front of him with her arms folded across her chest. She looked over his shoulder and said nothing. "I can't deal with start times," the soundman went on. "I can only deal with finish times. You guys are *finished* at five after eleven, so you *better* set up."

By the time Leslie Ming, the drummer, had found a parking space and brought his kit into the club, it was ten-thirty. It would take fifteen minutes for him to set up his drums and for Michael Ciro and Eddie Martin, the bass player, to put their amplifiers in place and tune their instruments, which would leave twenty minutes for the band to perform, instead of the forty-five they had expected.

Sophia and Michael and Leslie and Eddie began playing at ten-forty-five. Sophia spent the first few minutes of her performance shedding her indignation by making obscene and menacing gestures toward the soundman.

At the end of the fourth song, the soundman appeared at the edge of the stage. Standing in front of Sophia, he held a finger in the air, and mouthed the words "One more." Sophia shook her head. He persisted in waving his finger, and she ignored him. He tugged on her microphone cord, the way you might tug on the leash of a disobedient dog, and thrust his finger in front of her once more. The cords on his neck stood out.

The band began playing. Sophia

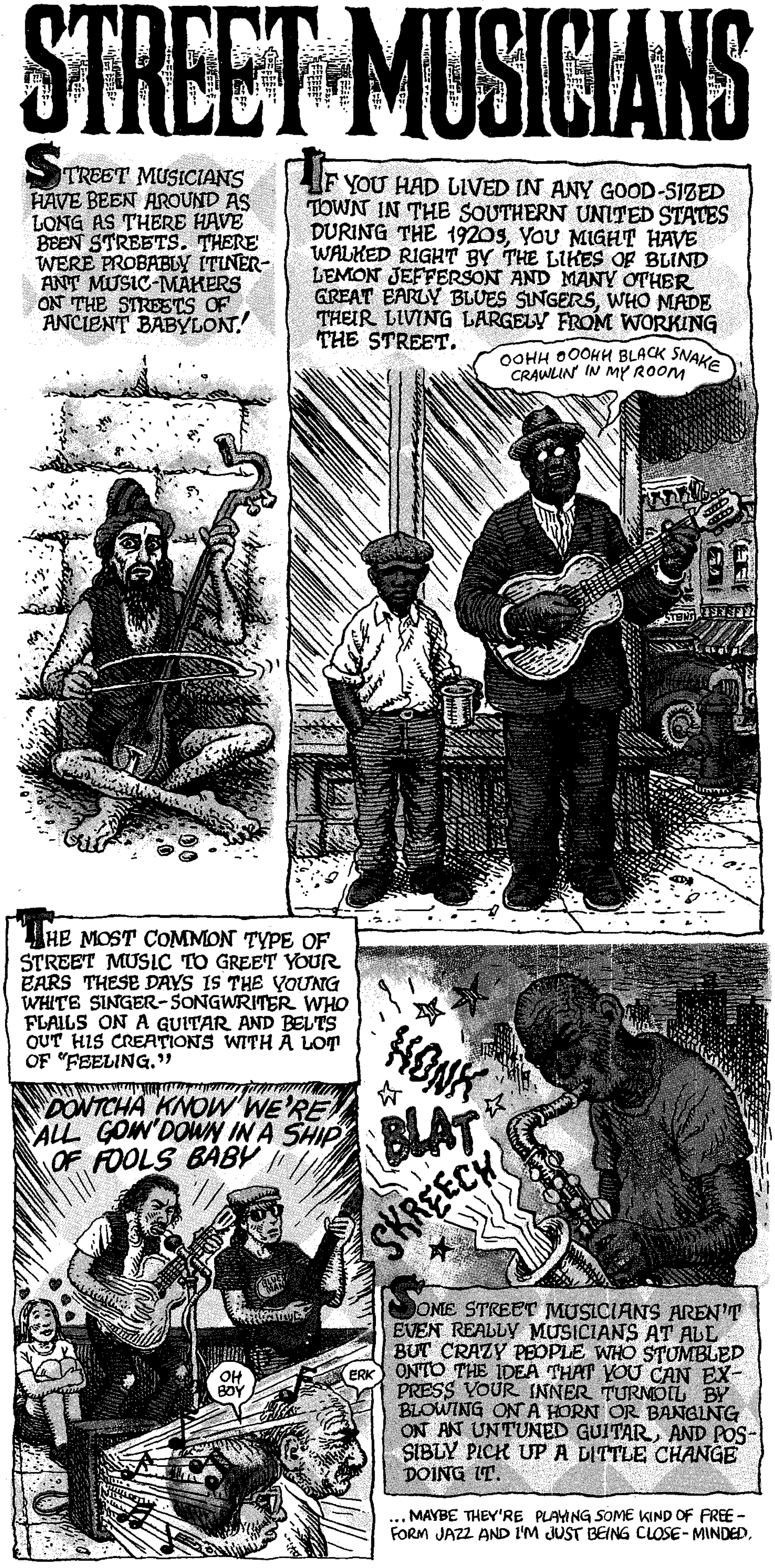
ended the song and started another. While she was singing, the soundman turned off her microphone, and she seemed to lose control of herself. On one wall of the stage was a sign that said "Brownies," in white letters on a black ground. Sophia pulled it down. She ran to the front of the stage and knocked the monitors to the dance floor. Then she ran to the far corner of the stage and began shaking a column of speakers that was standing on top of a table. Someone in the crowd yelled to Michael, "Man, you better go get her!" Michael ran over and put his hand on her arm.

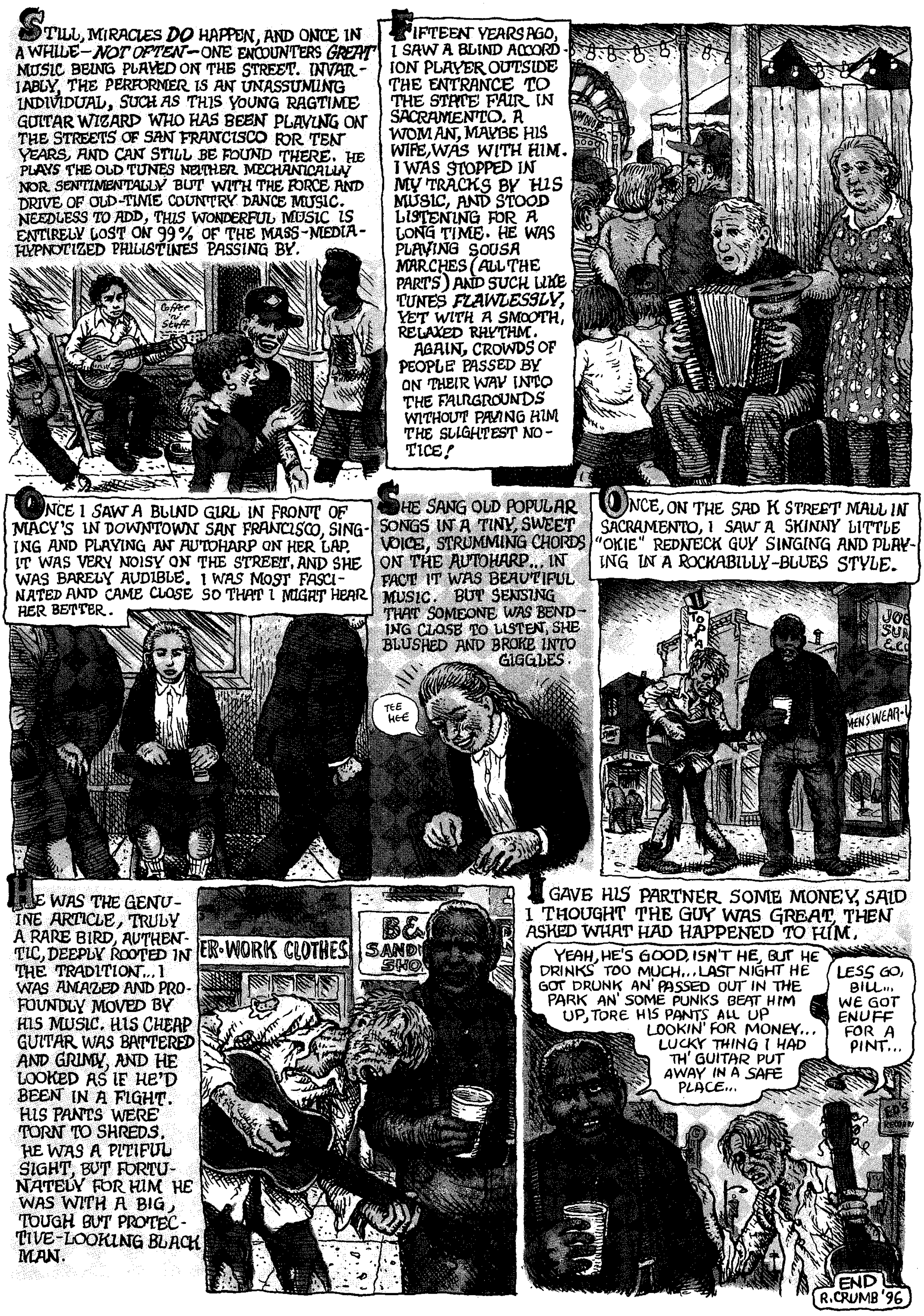
The soundman came to the stage to demand the microphone. Sophia said, "Don't say two words to me." The soundman retreated. He came back with two big guys and stood behind them. Sophia glared at them. Seconds went by. Everyone was watching her. When she was sure that Michael and Eddie had packed their guitars and Leslie his drums, she made a lewd and extravagantly showy gesture, and, with the crowd clapping and laughing and calling her name, she surrendered the microphone.

The soundman refused to pay them. Michael tried to get the band's money from the woman at the door, and she said that she had been told not to give it to them. Michael said, "Who told you? Go get him." She left, and he turned abruptly and walked outside. "It's probably two hundred bucks," he said. "Who cares?"

Sophia was standing on the sidewalk with five or six women friends. "Every time I play in the East Village, something bad happens," she said.

Perhaps twenty-five people stood on the sidewalk in front of the club—enough so that anyone who wanted to pass had to step into the street. A black man, a member of one of the other bands on the bill, appeared in the club's doorway and said in a loud voice, "Where's Sophia? Sophia, where you at?" Everyone turned to look at him. When he saw Sophia, he walked toward her. Towering over her, shouting at the top of her head, he said, "Don't even talk to me. I don't want to hear one thing. Nothing. I've been wanting to do that for *years*, and you did it before me, and that's the *only* reason I hate you. Girl, you are ready *now*." ♦


STREET MUSICIANS
STREET MUSICIANS HAVE BEEN AROUND AS LONG AS THERE HAVE BEEN STREETS. THERE WERE PROBABLY ITINERANT MUSIC-MAKERS ON THE STREETS OF ANCIENT BABYLON!
IF YOU HAD LIVED IN ANY GOOD-SIZED TOWN IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES DURING THE 1920s, YOU MIGHT HAVE WALKED RIGHT BY THE LIKES OF BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON AND MANY OTHER GREAT EARLY BLUES SINGERS, WHO MADE THEIR LIVING LARGELY FROM WORKING THE STREET.
OOHH OOOHH BLACK SNAKE CRAWLIN' IN MY ROOM
THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF STREET MUSIC TO GREET YOUR EARS THESE DAYS IS THE YOUNG WHITE SINGER-SONGWRITER WHO FLAILS ON A GUITAR AND BELTS OUT HIS CREATIONS WITH A LOT OF "FEELING."
DONTCHA KNOW WE'RE ALL GOIN' DOWN IN A SHIP OF FOOLS BABY
OH BOY
ERK
HONK
BLAT
SKREECH
SOME STREET MUSICIANS AREN'T EVEN REALLY MUSICIANS AT ALL BUT CRAZY PEOPLE WHO STUMBLED ONTO THE IDEA THAT YOU CAN EXPRESS YOUR INNER TURMOIL BY BLOWING ON A HORN OR BANGING ON AN UNTUNED GUITAR, AND POSSIBLY PICK UP A LITTLE CHANGE DOING IT.
...MAYBE THEY'RE PLAYING SOME KIND OF FREE-FORM JAZZ AND I'M JUST BEING CLOSE-MINDED.



STILL, MIRACLES ***DO*** HAPPEN, AND ONCE IN A WHILE—***NOT OFTEN***—ONE ENCOUNTERS ***GREAT*** MUSIC BEING PLAYED ON THE STREET. INVARIABLY, THE PERFORMER IS AN UNASSUMING INDIVIDUAL, SUCH AS THIS YOUNG RAGTIME GUITAR WIZARD WHO HAS BEEN PLAYING ON THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO FOR TEN YEARS, AND CAN STILL BE FOUND THERE. HE PLAYS THE OLD TUNES NEITHER MECHANICALLY NOR SENTIMENTALLY BUT WITH THE FORCE AND DRIVE OF OLD-TIME COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC. NEEDLESS TO ADD, THIS WONDERFUL MUSIC IS ENTIRELY LOST ON 99% OF THE MASS-MEDIA-HYPNOTIZED PHILISTINES PASSING BY.

Coffee 'n' Stuff

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, I SAW A BLIND ACCORDION PLAYER OUTSIDE THE ENTRANCE TO THE STATE FAIR IN SACRAMENTO. A WOMAN, MAYBE HIS WIFE, WAS WITH HIM. I WAS STOPPED IN MY TRACKS BY HIS MUSIC, AND STOOD LISTENING FOR A LONG TIME. HE WAS PLAYING SOUSA MARCHES (ALL THE PARTS) AND SUCH LIKE TUNES ***FLAWLESSLY***, YET WITH A SMOOTH, RELAXED RHYTHM.

AGAIN, CROWDS OF PEOPLE PASSED BY ON THEIR WAY INTO THE FAIRGROUNDS WITHOUT PAYING HIM THE SLIGHTEST NOTICE!

ONCE I SAW A BLIND GIRL IN FRONT OF MACY'S IN DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO, SINGING AND PLAYING AN AUTOHARP ON HER LAP. IT WAS VERY NOISY ON THE STREET, AND SHE WAS BARELY AUDIBLE. I WAS MOST FASCINATED AND CAME CLOSE SO THAT I MIGHT HEAR HER BETTER.

SHE SANG OLD POPULAR SONGS IN A TINY, SWEET VOICE, STRUMMING CHORDS ON THE AUTOHARP... IN FACT IT WAS BEAUTIFUL MUSIC. BUT SENSING THAT SOMEONE WAS BENDING CLOSE TO LISTEN, SHE BLUSHED AND BROKE INTO GIGGLES.

ONCE, ON THE SAD K STREET MALL IN SACRAMENTO, I SAW A SKINNY LITTLE "OKIE" REDNECK GUY SINGING AND PLAYING IN A ROCKABILLY-BLUES STYLE.

TOPHA
JOE SUR
MENSWEAR

HE WAS THE GENUINE ARTICLE, TRULY A RARE BIRD, AUTHENTIC, DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE TRADITION... I WAS AMAZED AND PROFOUNDLY MOVED BY HIS MUSIC. HIS CHEAP GUITAR WAS BATTERED AND GRIMY, AND HE LOOKED AS IF HE'D BEEN IN A FIGHT. HIS PANTS WERE TORN TO SHREDS. HE WAS A PITIFUL SIGHT, BUT FORTUNATELY FOR HIM HE WAS WITH A BIG, TOUGH BUT PROTECTIVE-LOOKING BLACK MAN.

ER·WORK CLOTHES
B&
SAND
SHO

I GAVE HIS PARTNER SOME MONEY, SAID I THOUGHT THE GUY WAS GREAT, THEN ASKED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM.

YEAH, HE'S GOOD, ISN'T HE, BUT HE DRINKS TOO MUCH... LAST NIGHT HE GOT DRUNK AN' PASSED OUT IN THE PARK AN' SOME PUNKS BEAT HIM UP, TORE HIS PANTS ALL UP LOOKIN' FOR MONEY... LUCKY THING I HAD TH' GUITAR PUT AWAY IN A SAFE PLACE...
LESS GO, BILL... WE GOT ENUFF FOR A PINT...
END
R. CRUMB '96

ANNALS OF COMPOSING

THE OUTSIDER

Lou Harrison comes in from the fringe.

BY MARK LEVINE

When Lou Harrison, one of America's leading composers, becomes exhausted with the struggle to transform sounds into music, he likes to recharge himself by escaping into a resonant silence. On a Tuesday afternoon in May, an indiscreet rifling through Harrison's stack of mail reveals the arrival of the latest issue of the magazine *Deaf Life*. Although the composer is nearly eighty, it doesn't take long to realize that his hearing is as sharp as a Great Dane's. Even so, he is a devoted student of American Sign Language. "Sign language," Harrison tells me, "is a blessed relief from all ears, all the time." He has long felt assailed by the noise of the modern world and for years refused to venture far from home without cotton tucked in his ears. That evening, his weekly signing group meets in his house in Aptos, California, on a high spit of land overlooking the Pacific. The only sounds in the room come from springs in the ragged sofa. Occasionally, one of the five participants lets out a giggle, egged on by the gnomelike figure of Harrison, whose powdery white hair is gathered with a rubber band into a short ponytail. Sitting at the edge of the group's circle, I find myself wondering what Harrison's gestures may be saying, and wondering, further, about the silence out of which his strange, unclassifiable music emerges.

Although John Cage once called him "one of the most prolific composers who has ever lived," Harrison has, until recently, been a shadowy, enigmatic presence in serious American music. For years, while most American composers were thrashing out the implications of European modernism, as formulated by Debussy, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky, Harrison was pricking his ears toward Asia and fashioning what was perhaps America's first important body of "multicultural" music. On the few occasions when concert planners thought about him at all, they tended to regard him as rather flaky—a West Coast recluse with a taste for exotic sounds. He seemed, at best, a maverick whose music not only refused to conform to any of the "isms" in the air but committed the modernist outrage of being accessible.

In contrast to the knotty inhospitability that characterized so much American music in the postwar years, Harrison's work had the audacity to be sensuous—at times, downright tuneful. As the restrictive dictates of modernism have yielded to the laissez-faire of postmodernism, however, his music has come to seem uncannily prescient, because of its global reach and its capacity to draw inspiration from a variety of sources, both "high" and "low." To the current younger generation of composers, his music is becoming "central" in the way that the music of such American modernist mandarins as Roger Sessions, Elliott Carter, and Milton Babbitt did to earlier generations. At the end of a musically splintered century, Harrison is being rediscovered as a grand old man of American music.

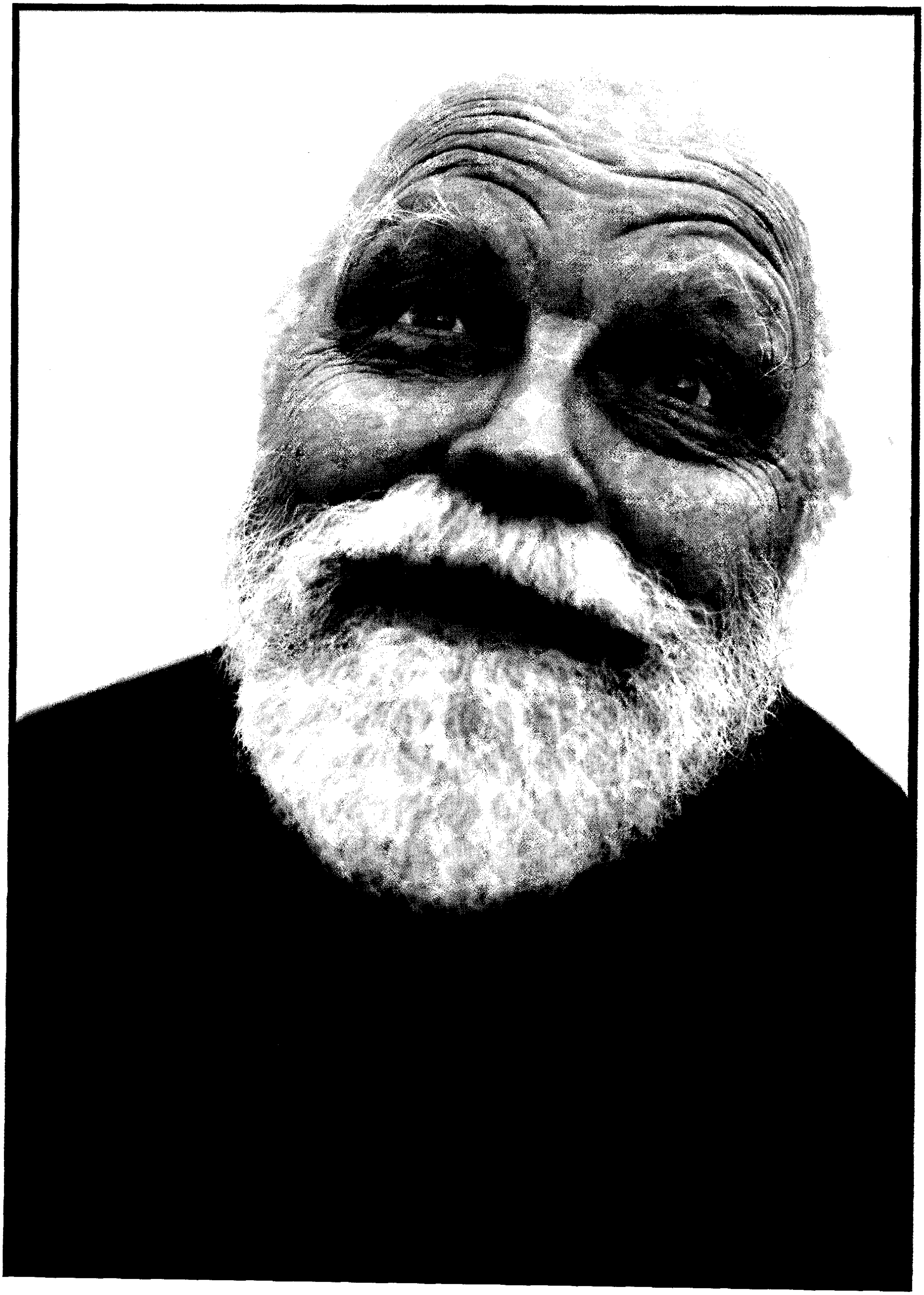
For someone who says that he didn't really consider himself a "professional composer" until five years ago, this attention has been both gratifying and alarming. Until last year, Harrison's work had failed to appear on a program of the major orchestra nearest his home, the San Francisco Symphony. A sign of his abrupt graduation from fringe figure to artistic patriarch came in June, when Harrison was invited by the orchestra's music director, Michael Tilson Thomas, to take part in the San Francisco Symphony's festival of American music. The concert hall was crowded with a refreshing mixture of conservatively dressed symphonygoers and unmistakable followers of the Grateful Dead, whose surviving members were performing in a work by John Cage. When the reluctant Harrison shuffled onstage in an enormous, untucked-in red corduroy shirt, the Deadheads greeted him with a roar befitting an aging rock star.

Having spent the past half century in a self-protective cocoon, Harrison is suddenly writing music on demand. He is hastening to complete three major commissions for what he calls "plucking pieces," all of which should receive New York premières next spring, in honor of his eightieth birthday: a set of dances for the Mark Morris Dance Group, featuring solo pieces specially written for Yo-Yo Ma; a suite for the Japanese samisen, a banjolike instrument; and a concerto for Chinese pi-pa and strings, requested by the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra and its conductor, Dennis Russell Davies. His music is being recorded at an accelerating pace: four new compact disks, including a wide range of his work, are now in production. And he is currently the subject of three biographies-in-progress.

I had known little about Harrison or his music before I arranged to visit him late this spring. I had heard devotees speak of him in the rapturous tones reserved for gurus. I had heard him referred to as "the father of American minimalism" and the "spiritual son of Charles Ives." Coming across old photographs of him, I'd been struck by his thick, claylike features, sculpted by severe concentration, and his full, snowy beard.

Pulling into his driveway, which is occupied by an old sky-blue Mercedes-Benz with a license plate reading "CMPOSR 1" and a Volkswagen van covered with moss and lichen, I feel like an intruder. The surrounding hills are crowded with con-

Harrison is benefitting from the sort of belated exposure that has brought into the limelight other "marginal" composers of the century, like Leoš Janáček and Morton Feldman. Photograph by Fergus Greer.



temporary houses vying for spectacular ocean views, but the composer's house, sided with weathered redwood and shaded by eucalyptus, madrona, and oak trees, has the feeling of a hermitage.

I find Harrison standing at his dining table and pulling a comb through the thick white hair of William Colvig, his companion of thirty years, whose arthritis makes it difficult for him to lift his arms. The house looks like a stage set for a benign psychedelic pageant. Decorated with a pack rat's abandon, it features carved masks from Mexico, Iranian tiles, an exuberant religious tableau from Korea painted on paper and silk. Glass chandeliers scatter daylight over the walls and floor. A patchwork curtain is hung over a series of closets, as if to conceal some imponderable chaos.

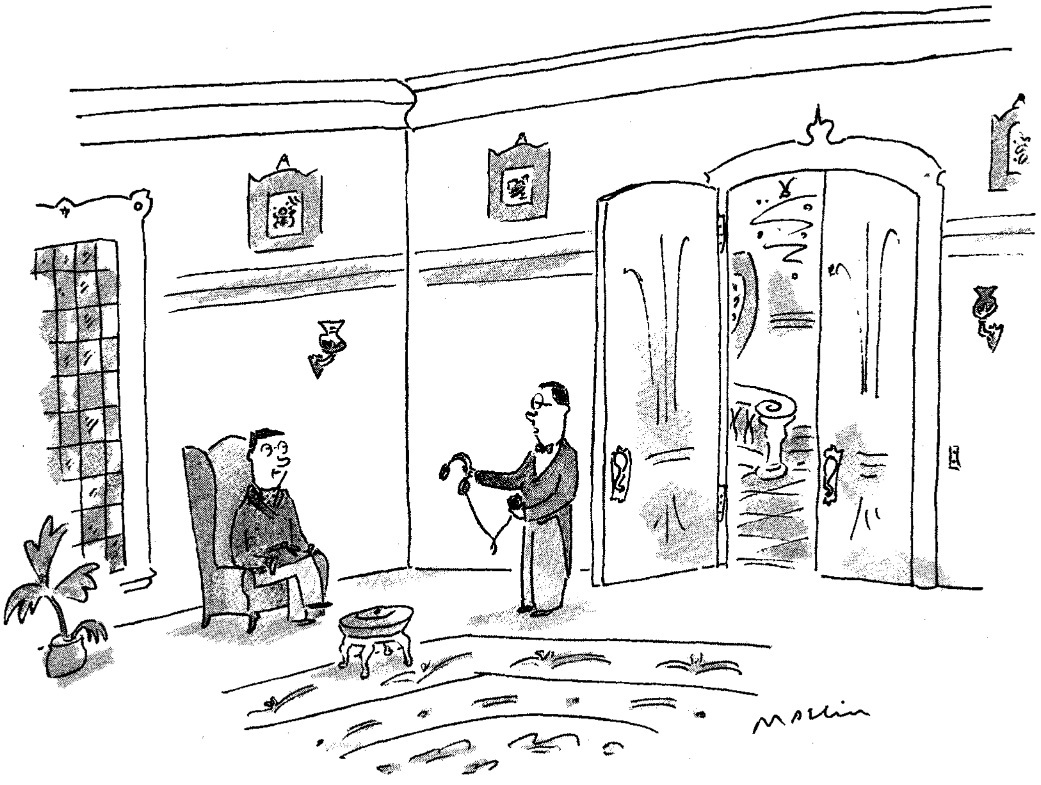
Although the two men are the same age, Colvig, slightly shrunken and brittle, seems older. He speaks little, and has a distracted, faraway quality. Harrison, on the other hand, is robust and eager to charm, despite having weathered triple-bypass surgery in 1989. He talks of the things that delight him—the basil in his garden, the sound of a well-built gong, describing them as "marvellous," "heavenly," or "glorious," with drawn-out vowels and a skyward roll of the eyes. He frequently bursts into laughter at his own utterances, like someone who has spent a great deal of time alone. A print shirt is draped, tentlike, over his considerable bulk, and a bolo tie with a silver clasp, inset with turquoise and coral, dangles around his neck; he guesses that he hasn't worn a knotted tie since 1947.

On the advice of a friend who had fallen under the sway of Harrison's music, I have spent much of the previous month listening to it, struggling to detect patterns. Although many of Harrison's works were written for Western orchestral instruments in traditional forms—there are symphonies, a string quartet, sonatas, concertos—their long stretches of unmodulated harmonies and trance-inducing rhythms give them a distinctly non-Western feeling. Harrison has also composed infectious pieces for flowerpots, plumbing pipes, water bowls, and his own Geiger counter. Moreover, he has persistently drawn on traditions unfamiliar to most Americans, writing for the Chinese sheng (a mouth organ), the Korean *miguk piri* (a double-reed woodwind), the Japanese *daiko* (a two-headed drum), and the African mbira (a thumb piano). One particularly haunting Harrison score, called "Main Bersama-Sama" (which is Indonesian for "Playing Together"), traces a dialogue between a tremulous Indonesian flute and a sleeker French horn, in which the two instruments take turns playing the same melody against a constant rhythmic spiral of gongs and metallophones.

Harrison's music can be harshly dissonant—as in a 1963 protest piece called "A Hatred for the Filthy Bomb"—but it tends to favor straightforward and memorable melodies. A 1985 piano concerto has the expansive emotional sweep of Brahms, with occasional forays into melodrama; the suite from a 1949 ballet, "Solstice," is marked by an unceasing rhythmic murmur, familiar in recent minimalist music. In my motel room, down the road from Harrison's house, I listen to his Suite for Violin, Piano, and Small Orchestra, a piece dating from 1951. That year, Harrison had terminated an unhappy residence in New York: having suffered an emotional collapse, he had fled the enervating pressures of the East Coast music world. The music has the brittle sound of a song a child might sing to stave off the fear of encroaching darkness. It reminds me of the paintings of Paul Klee—an innocent's playful description of a harrowing vision.

HARRISON'S growing stature as a composer is fostered by factors that reveal as much about the fitful progress of twentieth-century American music as they do about Harrison himself. His broadened recognition has undoubtedly been spurred by genuine interest in the odd course of his career. Harrison is also benefitting from the compensatory effects of the sort of belated exposure that has brought into the limelight other "marginal" composers of the century, like Leoš Janáček and Morton Feldman.

"I'm not a joiner-upper," he tells me when we resume our conversation the next day. "I don't have any penchant for being part of a cohesive group of people essentially doing the same thing. And I don't agree with the European modernist notion that you have to destroy the past in order to create. That's nonsense. You just create." Like other



"Hootie and the Blowfish, sir—on the headphones."

American artists, composers have struggled between capitalizing on a vast European heritage, and discovering forms that are expressive of the realities of America. For most of this century, the map of the serious American-music world was roughly divided between composers who took up the banner of European modernism and those who promoted a nativist art based on the inclusion of American folk and popular music.

The familiar clash over ownership of the "American identity" has never much interested Harrison. He defines "American music" as "what's written by American composers." During the ten years he spent in New York, in the forties and early fifties, he grew wary of what he regarded as the narrow, insular concerns of New York's musical culture. "There were the Americanists—Aaron and Leonard and Virgil, and so on" (Copland, Bernstein, and Thomson). "And there were the Europeanists—the serial, or twelve-tone, group. Everyone knew who was in what camp, and it seemed that the Americanists and the serialists represented the greater part of what was available."

Harrison, however, was attracted to a different strain in the American consciousness, one that resisted swearing oaths to any particular set of aesthetic procedures. Charles Ives was his model. In the mid-thirties, when he wrote to Ives from San Francisco expressing an interest in his music, Ives's iconoclastic work had scarcely been performed for some thirty years. "Mr. Ives sent me a crate of manuscripts in photostatic reproduction," Harrison recalls. "The scores were often illegible, and pages would be missing." Harrison occupied himself for ten years with editing the scores and preparing them for publication. "It was excavation," he says. "When I'd finally sifted through the rubble, Ives would scribble changes on the fresh copy. I don't think he ever wanted to actually finish a piece." So completely did Harrison immerse himself in Ives's work that his reconstruction of missing pages from the older composer's "Robert Browning Overture" was discovered to be surprisingly close to the original when the pages were later found.

The two men met only once—in 1947, when Harrison was summoned to Ives's New York brownstone. Ives was going blind. "He asked me to be his eyes, to help him put out a complete, corrected edition of his work," Harrison says. "It was too big an undertaking. He was very tense, and his skin was almost translucent. He whirled a cane around the room in excitement. He had a way of abruptly disappearing, midsentence, and just as suddenly returning." Harrison never tried to imitate Ives's music in his own compositions. "From Mr. Ives I learned how to be free," he says. "The enormous range of what he wrote, from songs of two or three measures to huge works, the large orchestral palette, the intricately interwoven rhythms—he would try anything. It was thrilling." In 1946, Harrison conducted the first complete performance of an Ives symphony—the Third Symphony, written between 1901 and 1904. Ives won a Pulitzer Prize for the work, and split the proceeds with Harrison.

"Can Wolfgang come out and play?"

• •

Harrison has followed Ives's lead in pursuing a music that is notable for its range and generosity of spirit. ("Early on, I spread out my toys on a large acreage," he says.) He guides me around what he calls his Ives Room—a barnlike space that occupies fully half of his house, and whose construction was subsidized by money that Harrison receives as an heir to Ives's estate. A concrete floor, padded with layers of rugs, is crowded with harps, guitars, a pair of reed organs, and an 1871 Steinway grand piano (which belonged to another American maverick composer, Henry Cowell). In one corner, stacks of compact disks remain in their plastic wrapping, since Harrison is no longer inclined to keep up with music that is sent to him. But most of the Ives Room is given over to an astonishing assortment of instruments, strewn about like upset crockery. I'm hoping that Harrison will invite me to bang away with one of the

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padded mallets. He doesn't. When he retreats from the Ives Room, I stay behind, lean close to one of several racks of hollow iron globes, and strike the instruments with stiff taps, which I hope will remain undetected.

HARRISON, who was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1917, spent his youth in California, moving from town to town with his parents and younger brother. "We moved so frequently that I formed no real attachments," he says. "Except, of course, we always had a piano." I glance around at the chaotic accumulation of Harrison's belongings and note the unmistakable signs of desire for a permanent settlement. "I can't bear to throw anything out," he admits. Harrison's father was fascinated by new technology, and, except for a few years when he drifted to Nevada to mine mercury, he mostly sold and serviced cars. His mother, whom he describes as "earthy and intensely emotional," had grown up in a cabin in Skagway, Alaska. He took piano lessons and sang in church choirs. In Redwood City, a music teacher gave him the keys to the organ loft at a downtown church, and he spent hours there, improvising. "On weekends, I would glue my ear to the radio to hear the Metropolitan Opera," he recalls. "I would see the notes going by, and I would come out with an image of the piece."

Harrison isn't the sort of raconteur who relives the past through speech; his stories strike me as recycled, and short on detail, as if he were keeping himself at arm's length from his subject. He acknowledges that he has "selectively retained those memories that are most happy"—riding bicycles with his brother, taking trips to the beach in Oregon. He had a pained realization of his homosexuality when he was thirteen or fourteen. "This occurred in the rumble seat of a car in Redwood City," he tells me. "A group of kids had come to a make-out spot and paired off, and I suddenly felt a blast of melancholy and knew how different I was from the others." This difference, it seems, was readily detected. "Even though I'd played football when I was younger, now I was regarded as a sissy, tossed in the pool at the gym, and much teased."

Harrison moved to San Francisco when he was seventeen, and was drawn by the proselytizing force of Henry Cowell, whose New Music Society was pioneering the performances of contemporary music. Cowell promoted the invention of an American music freed from "the apron-strings of European tradition," and persuaded Harrison that music should accept all sources freely and without prejudice. Cowell's famous piano piece "The Banshee"—for which Harrison often served as "pedal boy" during performances—instructed the player to stick his head beneath the lid of the grand piano and strum the strings wildly. "Henry offered me a kind of permission," Harrison says. "He was very charming—vivid and bright-eyed. I flirted with him outrageously and never got a response—except a pleasant and knowing smile." Harrison would wander the streets of Chinatown listening to merchants playing exotic instruments outside their stores. For a quarter he could spend the evening at performances of Cantonese opera. He has said, "By the time I was an adult, I had heard much more Chinese opera than the Western variety."

Now he asks "Why should anything be off limits?" and he points to two dozen drums from around the world which line the tops of bookshelves in his house. He recalls attending a world-music conference with Cowell in Tokyo in 1961, during his first trip to Asia, when the delicate issues of ethnographic boundaries were beginning to be debated. Harrison says, "Henry got upset by this 'purity' issue. He stood up and said that he wanted to put in a word for hybrids. He said that in all things hybrids were healthy and productive. Later, it dawned on me that there's nothing *but* hybrids. There's no pure anything. You could argue that the piano really had its origins in Persia and was mechanized in Europe. Our current tuning system was actually devised by the Chinese over two thousand years ago. So-called Europe isn't a continent. It's just the other end of Asia—what I call Northwest Asia. In the back of every Western idea lies a connection with Asia. It's a web around the whole planet."

Mark Morris, who has choreographed four acclaimed dance works to Harrison's music, contrasts Harrison's long-standing reverence for non-European music—his multiculturalism—with the glib sampling of it undertaken by younger, postmodern composers, whose attitude, he says, seems to be, "Let's take a shopping trip to Indonesia." He adds, "For the older composers, like Lou, there wasn't any commercial gain to be had from studying other cultures. They did it to change themselves, to live their lives in the giant world of music."

Indeed, Harrison's music often sounds to me like the national music of an imagined country, at once remotely familiar and utterly strange. The writer and composer Paul Bowles wrote of a Moroccan who "on hearing the first tape of Lou Harrison's music couldn't rest until he'd copied it." Bowles went on to recount, "He came by yesterday to report the reactions of various friends: Senegalese, Iraquis and Nigerians, all of whom expressed more or less the same thought—that it was music which described Paradise of one kind or another." On a trip to Japan, Harrison was approached by an aged concertgoer who asked, "How did you know our children's melodies?"

DURING Harrison's student days in San Francisco, in the thirties, he was introduced, through Cowell, to the young John Cage. "Within a few hours, we were good friends, and we stayed that way until his death," Harrison says. "It was a long-lasting, mostly platonic love affair." Cage's death, in 1992, was, Harrison tells me, "the hardest to take." The two men maintained their friendship by agreeing to disregard the differences in their musical outlook: Cage was drawn to showmanship and the employment of chance procedures in composition; Harrison was given to introspection and a steady devotion to craftsmanship. He seems close to tears as he talks about Cage, and he dismisses my banal question "What was John like?" with "Oh, God!" Long before Cage publicly eclipsed Harrison, the two collaborated on a series of percussion concerts, "as a way of bypassing the establishment," in Harrison's words. "Why write a symphony and have your local conductor reject it when you could get your friends together and give concerts on percussion instruments?" he says. "It was wonderfully subversive. We went to junk yards and collected sounds wherever we could. The classic example is the automobile brake drum, which at this time was made of spun steel. It was a beautiful bell."

Subversiveness notwithstanding, Harrison did not completely turn his back on the Western tradition. During the Second World War, he spent a year in Los Angeles studying with Arnold Schoenberg, the high priest of European atonality. (Harrison had been classified 4-F and excused from military service. "I just answered the psychiatrist correctly," he explains. "They didn't want me, and I didn't want them.") He recalls Schoenberg as a "gentle man who got frightened when planes passed overhead" and who taught him the necessity of musical simplicity. "When I'm writing a melody for gamelan, on five notes," he says, "I often wonder, Is that Schoenberg's influence?"

In the early years of the war, Harrison moved to New York to be with his lover, who was a dancer with Lester Horton's company. With help from Virgil Thomson, the composer and critic for the New York *Herald Tribune*, Harrison squeezed out a living for much of the next ten years as a music reviewer and dance accompanist. He found the social intrigues of the New York music world debilitating. "I had a resistance to the quest for fame and fortune," he tells me. "I was struggling just to learn how to write music." He turned out hundreds of reviews, but felt that his ability to listen to music was compromised by his worrying about what to write. The city's constant energy drained his own creative energies. "The thing roars all day long, and there's no getting away from it," he says. "There are no woods to go to. Too much turbulence, too many people, too much noise." One night at the *Herald Tribune*, he grew so distraught while trying to finish a review that he vomited into a wastebasket. When he first arrived in Manhattan, he had "thought nothing of walking half the island," he says. "By the time I left, I would take the subway to go two blocks. I felt that the whole city was collapsing in on me." In 1947, he had a breakdown, during which, he says, "it was revealed to me that I was not a New Yorker." He spent nine months in hospitals, then taught music for a few years at various places,

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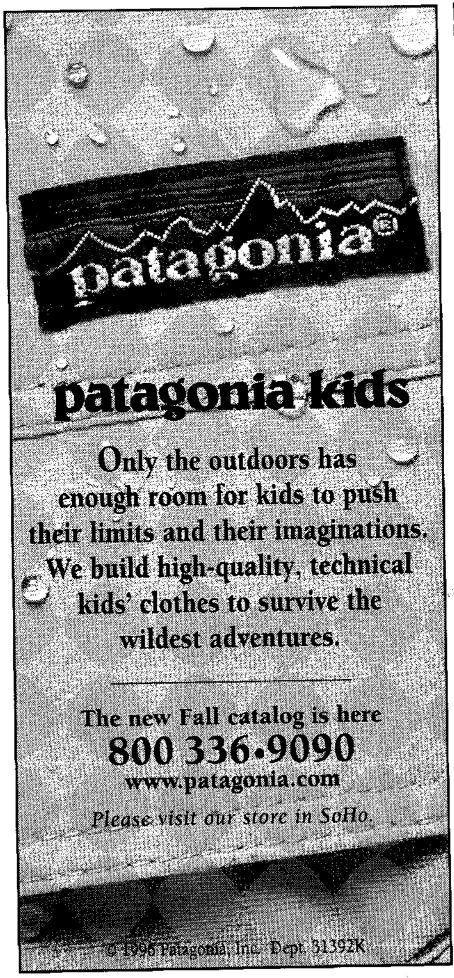
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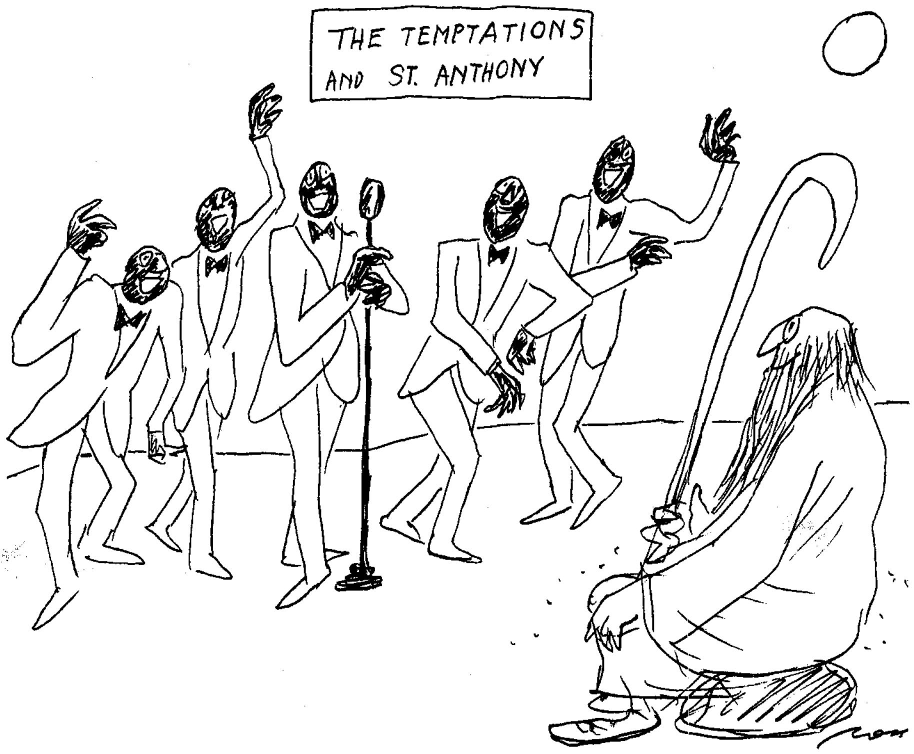
THE TEMPTATIONS AND ST. ANTHONY

including Black Mountain College, in North Carolina. After that, he removed himself to Aptos and vanished from the New York-based mainstream of American music.

ONE afternoon at Harrison's house, I ask where I can find a bathroom, and I am directed, coyly, to the Tchaikovsky Room, down the hall to the left. On the inside of the door, where one might expect to find a full-length mirror, a painting executed by Harrison of Tchaikovsky in paradise sassily confronts the viewer, in unembarrassed anatomical splendor.

Tchaikovsky and Handel, two composers whose alleged homosexuality has been the subject of much recent speculation, were models of a sort to the teen-age Harrison. For years, discussion of whether or not a composer's homosexuality could be discerned in his music was couched in euphemisms about excessive emotionality or an indulgent use of ornamentation. The discussion has acquired a gloss of theoretical sophistication without, I think, relinquishing basic clichés about gay behavior. One study has gone so far as to argue that gay composers, whose music lacks the explicitly gay content that makes, say, the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe or the plays of Tony Kushner available to sociological analysis, structure their music in characteristically "feminine" ways—a notion that accepts an emasculated view of gay men. Joseph Dalton, the managing director of Composers Recordings, Inc., which recently issued a compilation of music by Harrison, Ned Rorem, David Del Tredici, and Robert Helps with the title "Gay American Composers," has suggested that "gay composers perhaps have a more heightened sensuality, a deeper connection to their bodies."

Harrison says flatly, "If there is a gay aesthetic, I don't know what it is." He is not undeclarative about his sexuality, however. Four years ago, he and Colvig were Grand Marshals of the Santa Cruz Gay Pride Parade. He has written a chamber opera called "Young Caesar," which is based on the story of a love affair between the Roman general and an "Oriental king," and is performed by puppets. Homosexuals, he tells me, are "a cautionary minority" who provide useful information to the majority about life on the margins. "You develop a kind of steely attitude toward society when you find out that the simple act of congregating—the simple act of *being*—is illegal," he says. He's referring to the arrest, in 1936, of Henry Cowell on a morals charge, for an alleged tryst with a teen-age boy. Cowell spent four years of a fifteen-year sentence in San Quentin prison. "I'd seen Cowell shortly before his arrest, so it was very shocking," Harrison recalls. "But we all knew we were in danger of the police."

I wonder whether Harrison, having felt excluded from American society, was inspired to seek imaginative restitution abroad. Harrison tells me that in his travels—to Korea, Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand—he was apt to acquire a lover who would guide him through the local culture. "You've already crossed one major social border, just to be gay," he says. "So crossing other boundaries and being open to possibility comes rather naturally. You've already stepped outside."

Perhaps the best way to take the measure of the impossibly indefinite "gay sensibility" is by considering much of the postwar era in American music, when, as the composer John Adams says, "we were being told by the academic centers on the East Coast that important music had to be profoundly unattractive." The leading composers of "accessible" music—Copland, Thomson, Bernstein, Marc Blitzstein, Samuel Barber, all of them gay, and all without long-standing academic affiliations—became deeply unfashionable. (Other gay composers, among them Cowell, Cage, and Harry Partch, had never really moved in mainstream musical channels.) Could it be that the music that nevertheless continued to claim ready access to emotional life—tuneful, harmonically secure music—was in some sense *gay* music? In the aftermath of the Second World War, traditionally "beautiful" art of any kind appeared suspiciously superficial. When the power centers of music shifted from concert halls to universities, resident composers—most of them heterosexual—were freed from the constraints of having to please audiences. "Total serialism," in which all elements of musical composition were subjected to rigorously controlled patterning, was promoted as the logical culmination of European music, and the raw materials of music were dismantled and exposed to methodical scrutiny, with sometimes ugly results.

While the musically conservative public was being driven away from concert halls by music whose premise seemed to be that the ear had to be punished for the spirit to be edified, Harrison, following his breakdown, was in geographic retreat in California, "assembling a person out of the detritus." He worked as a lookout at a fire tower for some time. He worked as a florist. For five years, he served as a nurse in an animal clinic and took amphetamines to write music at night. When he was fifty, he began teaching at several Bay Area schools, and his principal subject matter was "world music," not "modern composition." Harrison says, "There's no reason music had to sound awful. I regard music as emotional math. It has to have the quality of inviting the soul."

Harrison and Colvig have lived together since 1967, when they met at the Old Spaghetti Factory, in San Francisco, during a performance of Sir William Walton's "Façade" narrated by Harrison and Ned Rorem. "When I met Bill, I was fifty," Harrison says. "I was a lonely man and a struggling one. He's made a loyal, firm structure of our lives." Colvig grew up in a logging town in Northern California, one of six children of a local bandmaster. He didn't think of making a career of music, because, he tells me, "it didn't seem like the hairy-chested thing to do." He drifted through Alaska and, during the Second World War, went to Iran as a military-communications specialist. An Army psychiatrist there agreed that San Francisco might be a comfortable civilian destination for him. Colvig joined the electricians' union there and worked for a contractor for more than twenty years. "I lived a sort of lonely, promiscuous gay life in San Francisco," he says. He attended concerts, but had few personal contacts with musicians until he met Harrison.

The two men share a kind of lazy, unforced intimacy. They have grown old together, and are acutely adjusted to each other's moods and habits. Colvig occasionally gibes Harrison for his weight; Harrison will sometimes address Colvig with the exaggerated patience one reserves for the doddering. (Much to Harrison's irritated dismay, Colvig is at times apt to fall asleep during meals.) They are devoted to long-established private rituals. Each morning, Colvig reads aloud to Harrison in a wry, pinched voice that seems to float from the deep nest of white beard that covers his face. He sets out fruit and coffee, then hobbles, in black running shoes, several slow miles through the hills and along the beaches of Aptos before joining

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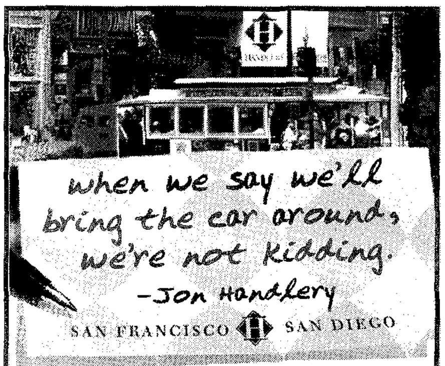

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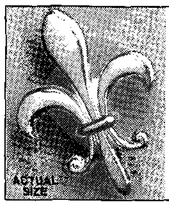

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Harrison at the table. Since Colvig insists on keeping the bedroom colder than Harrison can bear it, Harrison sleeps in a rusted, vine-covered trailer in the yard. Its dark interior is equipped with a small bed, hundreds of books in disorderly piles, a worktable, and a lamp.

IN "Lou Harrison's Music Primer," published in 1971, Harrison recommends that the novice in search of musical awakening "had best go to a country, quiet place for a while," until "your ears have recovered their powers and are usable again." One evening, I set off by myself after dinner to roam along Seacliff Beach and watch the moon rise over cypress trees. I pass a parked car, from which emanates the heavy thump and artificial twang of rock and roll. Harrison once described a piece of his as trying to evoke the "sound of the stars appearing in the night sky." This is not the sound of the stars. It occurs to me that Harrison's life in music has been directed largely by a quest for the *right* sound, a ghost sound that can be imagined only imperfectly until it breaks into the realm of the audible—in the case of the stars, for example, when a bunch of brass curtain rods is struck above a redwood resonator.

In the course of recovering his senses in Aptos, Harrison says, he realized that most Western music of the modern era was garishly out of tune, distorted by mechanical processes. For a piano to play in all twelve keys, he tells me, a "compromise" tuning system was devised in the eighteenth century, in which small deviations from acoustic precision were the price to be paid for harmonic flexibility. He maintains that "counterfeit sounds," vibrating at improper speeds, have been passed off as "real" ones and inflicted on the senses.

Harrison has composed many works for conventionally tuned instruments; otherwise, of course, it's nearly impossible to have scores performed. Many years ago, however, his uneasiness with their sounds prompted him to investigate non-European instruments and to build instruments tuned to his own specifications. He is the American visionary as tinkerer. Years before Harrison and Colvig travelled to Indonesia, they set out to construct instruments that would produce the rich, round hum produced by the array of percussion instruments that make up a Javanese gamelan. Whereas the Javanese instruments are typically built with metal slabs and bamboo resonators, Harrison and Colvig's "American gamelan" employs electrical conduits, furniture tubing, and scrap aluminum, with coffee cans soldered end to end as resonators. The slabs are hung on leather shoelaces, and the mallets are padded with bicycle tubing. "We don't have hundreds of years of tradition, the way the Javanese do," Colvig tells me. "So we just use whatever material we have that gives us what we want."

"There's scarcely anything as joyous as playing an instrument that you've just made," Harrison adds.

A FEW weeks later, in San Francisco: ten figures, mainly in black, are arrayed onstage in expectant postures, armed with an arsenal of mallets and sticks and what appears to be a pair of sawed-off baseball bats. Surrounding them is a clutter of metal disks and wind chimes, wooden boxes dangling from ropes, gourds, warped sheet metal, drums, and wooden blocks; a half-dozen oxygen tanks, spray-painted gold, hang from a rack. Behind them loom the gleaming pipes of a conventional organ. This is Lou Harrison's version of a Sunday-afternoon organ recital. I am attending the second concert program of the San Francisco Symphony's American festival—a marathon program called "An Afternoon with America's Musical Visionaries." This portion of the program includes movements from Harrison's 1973 Concerto for Organ with Percussion Orchestra, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas.

The piece opens with a restless, sombre melody that suggests a Native American's war chant. The organist plays it with his left hand. Meanwhile, his right hand slaps away at stretches of keyboard with a block of wood—a rude indignity to inflict on the organ. When the organ asserts its authority with sustained chords, a bawdy chorus from the noisemakers shouts it down. When the organ exhales its "divine breath," it is answered by boisterous blasts from the oxygen tanks. The two high-volume sound worlds—one sacred, the other profane—gradually become congruent, deliriously "harmonized."

Visionary? "No," Harrison says when I ask how he feels about such a label, "I'm a realist. The sounds themselves are my focus—you can't get realer than that. I don't see angels everywhere, and I don't go around with ankle bells."

For all its exuberance, there is nothing facile about this music. Writing music, for Harrison, is never simply a matter of translating experience into sound but, rather, one of using sound to pitch himself against silence, and to wait for a coherent response from the music of the world. Virgil Thomson once wrote of Harrison that "there was joy inside him, both joy and pain." Despite years of psychiatric treatment, Harrison is still prone to depression. The affliction may be particularly acute in a musical life that involves what Harrison calls a search for "the big vibrancy of American music," trusting his ears to guide him through an emotional life he only vaguely understands. "I'm a philosophical pessimist and a glandular optimist," he tells me. One afternoon, sitting at a sidewalk café, Harrison says, "When I'm composing full steam, I'm really manic. The music starts coming out of the head like yarn from a ball. There may be an eruption from my past or from my feelings that I have a hard time getting down on paper before it evaporates. These are precious moments."

FIFTY years ago, Harrison wrote that "American music, like so much other American art, is almost completely the product of amateurs." Professionalism, he feels, is achieved at the peril of imaginative vitality. The amateur, he reminds me, is a lover: "He loves something, gets hold of something, and takes a bite off." He adds, "I'm a grown-up kid. Art to me is play. Children get very serious about play. It's not frivolous—it's learning. If it's beautiful, that's a welcome bonus."

To keep the clangor of his stepped-up professional demands at bay, Harrison is designing a haven in the Mojave Desert. It's to be built of densely packed bales of straw, fixed to a concrete foundation. Set amid the forbidding groves of bright cholla cactus and the enormous sculptural windmills that harvest the high desert air, Harrison's dream house, with its thick straw walls, will be impervious to unwanted noise. "It will be like living in a straw cave," he says. "For a musician, it's Heaven." ♦

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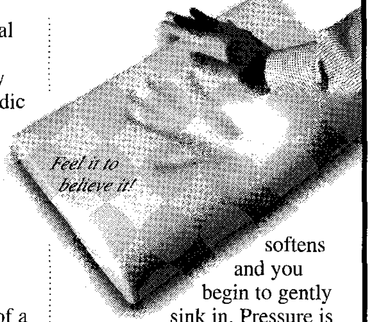

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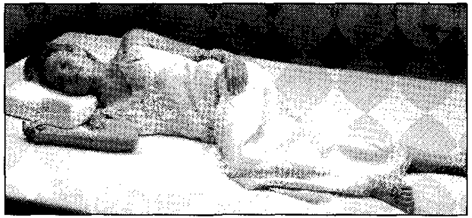

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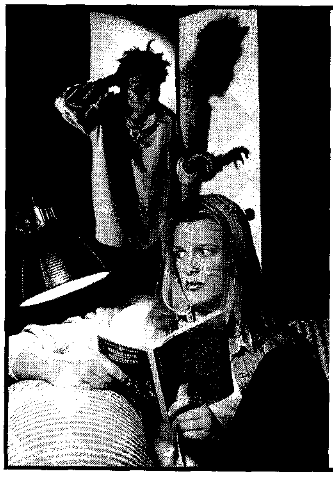

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

LISTENING TO SCHWARZKOPF

The Reich and the soprano.

BY WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

THERE must be a German word—opposed nouns clumped together in an unhappy hybrid—to describe my response to Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's voice. Worldlongingbitterness. Historyerasingbeauty. Bloodsublimity.

I listen to Schwarzkopf while I take early-evening baths. Sometimes I also play Miles Davis, Chris Connor, Bev Kelly, Alfred Cortot, or Mafalda Favero—but best for baths is Schwarzkopf, because her faultless voice carries so well above running water, and because her precise pitch and narrow vibrato recall me to highest principles. The music comes from speakers in a far room, so the piano accompaniment fades into inaudibility, and Schwarzkopf's voice alone penetrates my sanctuary. Purity is an ideology, but I embrace it while under Schwarzkopf's sway. Her voice tries to stand apart from vulgarity and taint, including the stain of her own past.

Until recently, one heard a lot about Maria Callas and too little about Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, the other scandalous and charismatic soprano of the nineteen-fifties. The two were, almost, friends. There are fascinating pictures of the divas together—able to be nice to each other because their essential repertoires didn't overlap. In one emblematic photograph, they share a table in Milan, circa 1954. Callas—painted lips seductively parted, nails shellacked, eyeliner drawn beyond the lid, in the Medea manner—stares at the camera, while Schwarzkopf, too scholastic to waste time striking poses, looks away. Once, she gave Callas a voice lesson at the restaurant Biffi Scala, and diners and waiters looked on as the two sopranos explored each other's instruments. As Schwarzkopf's husband, Walter Legge, recalled, "Callas sang with full voice the notes that were giving her trouble, while Schwarzkopf felt her diaphragm, lower jaw, throat, and ribs. . . . Within minutes Schwarzkopf was singing the same notes while Callas prodded her in the same places to find out how she kept those notes steady."

Schwarzkopf, now eighty and living near Zurich, is undergoing a public reconsideration, but the stuff of the reappraisal is familiar to veterans of the vocal world. Schwarzkopf began her career in Nazi Germany. Débuting with the Deutsche Oper, in 1938, she sang regularly during the war, but hit the international scene only after the Third Reich's defeat. A fascinating new biography of the soprano, by the British musicologist Alan Jefferson (Northeastern; $29.95), claims to clarify the nature of her Nazi allegiance. The book was published earlier this year in England, where Schwarzkopf was made a dame in 1992, and it caused a stir, which is only now reaching these shores.

Schwarzkopf has maintained, most famously in a 1983 letter to the New York *Times*, that she was involved with the Nazi Party only as far as she had to be to continue singing. According to Jefferson, on the basis of material he found in the soprano's ample *Reichskulturkammer* file, she was a *Führerin*, a leader, of a Nazi student organization for one school term, and became a member of the Party in 1940. Her Party number was 7,548,960. To join, Jefferson makes explicit, Schwarzkopf "had to sign a form stating that she came from an entirely Aryan family and had never been in any way connected with the Jewish faith; then, eight days later, she made another detailed declaration about the racial purity of her parents and grandparents, completed in her presence by a Party official at the Deutsche Oper." Jefferson reminds us that Party membership was not compulsory for "Aryan" musicians: when Wilhelm Furtwängler led the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra "only eight out of the one hundred and ten players were Party members."

Schwarzkopf sang for the Waffen-S.S. on the Eastern front, and she was a favorite of Goebbels and appeared in at least five propaganda films under his aegis. I have seen two clips. In one, she sings (in German) the end of Act I of Bizet's "Carmen": the Gypsy persuades Don José, the officer, to unshackle her while a Nazi officer in the opera-house audience watches. In another clip, she warbles Schumann in a tranquil living room while a servant moves anxiously to the window to watch enemy planes cross the sky.

After the war, Schwarzkopf's vessel hit choppy waters: she needed to undergo de-Nazification, and, according to Jefferson, she "fudged" by giving, on four separate occasions, misleading or conflicting answers to the Allies on the subject of her Nazi involvement. Jefferson alludes to intriguing rumors:

> The main reason [she lied] was probably fear for her career, which had progressed very satisfactorily so far; but we do not know exactly what lay at the core of this fear, what precisely she was trying to hide or attempting to obliterate, if it was more than just her Party membership. Colleagues and others have spoken of Schwarzkopf's "protector" in the highest ranks of the Party, but while two names in particular have been mentioned with some confidence, *this does not constitute evidence.*

Blacklisted (along with Furtwängler and Herbert von Karajan), she was forbidden to perform, and was threatened with deportation to Germany from Austria, where she had been singing with the Theater an der Wien. Finally, however, in early 1947, her case was closed, and she was effectively exonerated.

By then, she had met Walter Legge, an Englishman infatuated with German culture. She moved to London in 1947, and in 1953 they married. Legge himself had a legendary career as a record producer. For E.M.I., he supervised not only his wife's great recordings but many of Callas's; he shaped his wife's phrases, and from the beginning he seems to have supervised the rehabilitation of her reputation. Under his wing (and not without jealousy and skepticism among those in the music world who felt he exercised undue influence), she became a beloved fixture of the world's opera and recital stages. The Met, however, refused her: according to one person who was present at a Boston press conference in the early sixties, Schwarzkopf asserted that Sir Rudolf Bing, the general manager, had offered her the part of Tatyana in "Eugene Onegin," knowing full well that she would

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Schwarzkopf in 1955 with the San Francisco Opera's Kurt Herbert Adler and the composer Sir William Walton.

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come aboard only for a new production of "Der Rosenkavalier." Bing eventually conceded, and in 1964 she gave New York her Marschallin. She continued to perform, with a darkened yet still superbly controlled voice, until 1979, when Walter Legge died. Then came the fastidious master classes. Terrence McNally has recently put forward "master class" as shorthand for a has-been's sadistic pedagogy. Schwarzkopf, in her master classes, seems to have been formidable: to a student struggling with how to place the consonant "t" in a Hugo Wolf song, Schwarzkopf said (according to Jefferson), "You killed it with your chin!"

WHEN Renata Tebaldi was asked how she spends her retirement, she replied, "I am honored." Schwarzkopf, too, has occupied her days absorbing accolades and approving CD remasterings of old LPs. This year, in honor of her eightieth birthday, E.M.I. Classics has released the "Elisabeth Schwarzkopf Songbook," a collection of three disks of lieder performances, chosen by the soprano herself; a CD version of the mono recording of Karajan's "Rosenkavalier," remastered under Schwarzkopf's supervision; and a troubling, affecting video documentary, "Elisabeth Schwarzkopf: A Self-Portrait," in which the soprano, in voice-over, describes her career and her aesthetic philosophy but refuses to appear on camera.

In retrospective commentary, Schwarzkopf describes her attitude toward what she calls, euphemistically, politics: "I've heard people say, 'Oh, well, your parents should have made you interested in politics!' " But when visitors talked about events in Germany her parents ordered her out of the room: "My father said, my mother also, 'Go away. Don't listen, don't listen. . . . You go, you go.' And nobody will understand, nowadays, that we lived this kind of sheltered life, concentrated solely on music and on singing. It was very special." The war years seemed a series of lucky breaks, she says: "Usually the good times in my life came out of the very bad ones." She caught tuberculosis while filming propaganda in Berlin, and went to the mountains to recover, thereby missing the worst attacks on the city. Her good fortune continued: "I could go straight from tuberculosis to the old Vienna State Opera and sing, and then the Vienna State Opera was bombed—that was another end—but it made me sing in the Theater an der Wien, which was ever so much better than a big theater for me. It was marvellous—the acoustics, and everything. So that was also great luck."

Schwarzkopf remains acutely conscious of the specifically German nature of her art. Recalling the protesters outside her first New York recital, she claims that they were picketing against "the German," but in truth they were picketing against "the Nazi." Her New York début was a success, and she says that she was proud to win friends "in America, not for myself, but, I think, for what we stood for, for the German art." She asserts that when she sang at the United Nations, in 1959, she was proud "to confront our previous enemies, again with the German language, via lieder singing." And in footage from a master class Schwarzkopf instructs a student whose German is inadequate: "Too bad you weren't born with the language. The most beautiful lieder come from German poems. I can't help it."

ONE conventional way to describe Schwarzkopf's timbre is "covered." Her voice sounds caught in her throat or in her forehead—trapped somewhere, confined by its own smallness—yet powerful enough to cut straight through impediment. When Schwarzkopf covers the tone, she directs it on a muted detour through the mask. This signature sound takes the aggressive impulse—the ambition to be a great singer, the ambition to be immortal—and polishes it into something palatable, lustrous: preoccupied with beauty, she has no time for evil, or she has mastered the technique of turning unpleasantness into a mournfully pellucid tone. In the great phrases, she doesn't hit the note head on: it just appears, out of the vapor. One never hears the attack—just the released pitch.

I am sad that I never heard her sing in person: I never witnessed that teal-gowned splendor she unfurled on the recital stage, with her sumptuous hair style and her imperial manner—the gracious chatelaine, urbanely dispensing encore favors. I must remain content with the disks, among which I have many favorites. (I haven't heard the recordings she made during the Third Reich; although she began recording in 1937, the origins of her career are misrepresented on an E.M.I. Angel compilation called "The Early Years," which includes only performances from 1946 to 1955.) Her "Four Last Songs" (Richard Strauss's "Vier letzte Lieder") are indispensable. I know only the first version, recorded in 1953. (Some connoisseurs prefer the 1965 version, conducted by George Szell.) I never tire of these songs, sung by anyone, and particularly I never tire of them sung by Schwarzkopf, because, even in 1953, not yet at her career's midpoint, she mingles the blooming (a young woman's cantilena soaring above the orchestra) with the autumnal (Strauss saying goodbye to the voice and to the world).

Schwarzkopf has achieved immortality on the basis of her renditions of Schubert and Mozart lieder. Slow tempi permit diminuendi nested within diminuendi, and microscopic attention to vowel coloration. But, no matter how slow, how far pushed toward the breaking point, her phrases always cohere; her intense, small, forward tone seems *poured* through her cheekbones. I love her late (1974) recording of Schumann's "Liederkreis," a performance of which she didn't wholeheartedly approve. She thought her voice sounded old. I agree, but I love it old, consigned to vocal compromise, the songs transposed down, the sign of Schumann's incipient madness everywhere evident in the haggard, erratic harmonies. I love her Belinda in "Dido and Aeneas," singing "Pursue thy conquest, Love!" But, above all, I associate her with the renunciatory soprano line in the last-act trio of "Rosenkavalier." No matter what soprano is singing the Marschallin, I always imagine that it is Schwarzkopf saying (I freely paraphrase), "There are more things in the world than I could ever dream, and, until the dire event happens to you, you never believe it will happen—but then it happens."

AND what of this listener's history? I am an assimilated Jew, content to be assimilated, relieved to be religiously unobservant. I don't know any Hebrew, or have forgotten the little I once learned. My father, with his parents, left Berlin in 1936. Other members of his family left, too. Others stayed. That story is not entirely mine to tell. But it is my Schwarzkopf story. Listening to Schwarzkopf I feel at my most Jewish, if only because in listening to her I grow to feel quite intensely German.

Listening, I ride with Schwarzkopf into the Teutonic balm she offers, and I allow her sound to purify me. And I also let her timbre purify her past. Listening, I pity Schwarzkopf—because her voice sounds as if it might have pitied me. I pity her because she suffered, it seems, for her art—because one hears stories about how hard she forced herself to work, and how hard her husband worked her in the recording and practice studio. Even Karajan once protested to Legge, "Don't crucify the girl!" Jefferson reports that after one recital Legge said to her, "You sang that last Wolf lied like a pig." Indeed, Jefferson notes that Legge "was quite capable of humiliating or insulting her in public when she said or did something of which he disapproved."

A persistent rumor: Legge was Jewish. I can find no proof. Neither can Jefferson, although he reports that Rudolf Bing, alluding to Schwarzkopf, once said, "I can forgive her for having worn a Nazi uniform and for taking an American colonel as a boyfriend right after the war, but I cannot swallow the fact that she then married a Jew." The thought comforts: maybe she repented?

I don't address the Schwarzkopf case because I think it exemplifies any principle, or because I think it solves—or even casts a significant degree of light on—the relation between ideology and art, or between moral conduct and creative genius. I am preoccupied with the Schwarzkopf question only because her voice has presented me with an ambiguity ever since I first heard her sing the Verdi "Requiem" on the 1964 Giulini recording. Her voice, with its sublimely projected vowels and its air of a world that will never be marred or crimped or diminished, asks me whether I live fully and honestly enough, and whether I have too quickly shut the door on lost experience. Her voice demands that I make a stricter reckoning of my own life and see if it measures up. Her voice shames me into wishing I were cleaner, sweeter, and more concise. And so I suppose it is a relief that she, too, has something about which she might feel ashamed.

Tonight, another unfocussed summer evening, I will play a live-performance CD (1956, Carnegie Hall) of Schwarzkopf singing the great aria from Mozart's "Così Fan Tutte," "Come scoglio": "How like an unchanging rock are my affections." Her voice will seem the agent of a paradoxical salvation, and I won't know whether she is saving me or I am saving her. ◆

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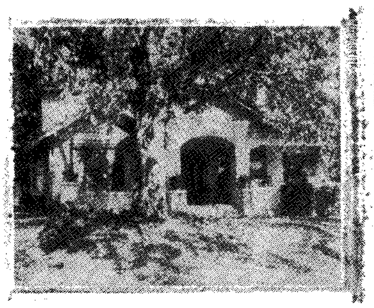

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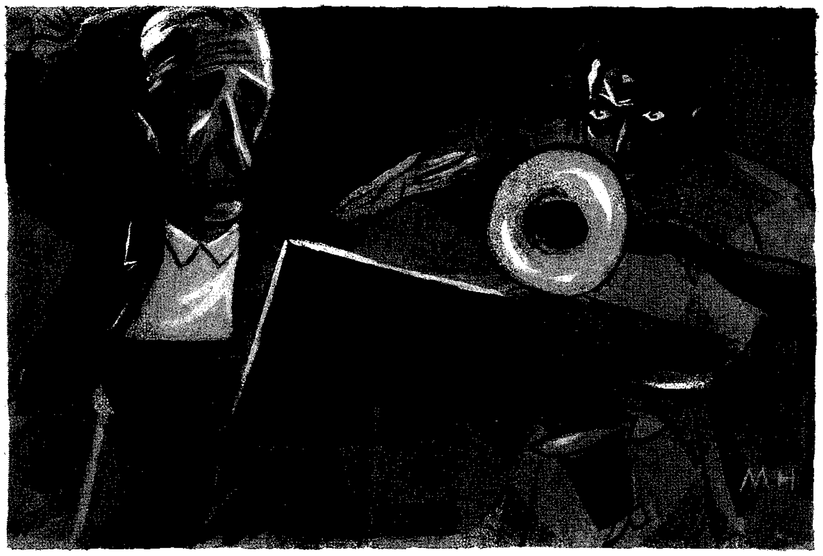
LOVE MATCH

Miles Davis and Gil Evans made magic out of melancholy.

BY WHITNEY BALLIETT

COLUMBIA, after repeated delays and circumlocutions, has at last released "Miles Davis & Gil Evans: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings," a reissue of the three famous Davis-Evans collaborations—"Miles Ahead," "Porgy and Bess," and "Sketches of Spain"—which were made between 1957 and 1960. The reason for the long wait is now clear: everything but the kitchen sink has been included. There are six CDs; three contain the three original LPs, together with rehearsal takes and alternate takes. The three others include the strange "Quiet Nights" album and later fragmentary Davis-Evans get-togethers, along with still more takes, remakes, overdubbings, and related effluvia from the dozen or so sessions that were needed to make the original recordings. In addition, there is a two-hundred-page booklet composed of the original LP liner notes (George Avakian, André Hodeir, Charles Edward Smith, Nat Hentoff), an Avakian account of how the Davis-Evans collaborations came about, analyses and overviews by Bill Kirchner and Bob Belden, and page after page of annotations and microscopic discographical data by the indefatigable jazzologist Phil Schaap. Perhaps we once knew, and had forgotten, that these recordings, made on tape instead of the wax disks used for 78 r.p.m.s, were the beginning of the debatable practice of editing and splicing jazz recordings, a practice now much reduced. Schaap, for instance, tells us that "The Meaning of the Blues," in "Miles Ahead," is the only complete, unspliced take on that album. In short, the Davis-Evans albums in the Columbia box are composite jazz, pastiche jazz. (Mosaic, the invaluable reissue house, is also bringing the set out, but only on LPs—eleven of them. They can be had at 203-327-7111.)



Davis is telling you how hard it is to be Davis; Evans, constantly underneath and around, never stops nodding, "Yes, yes. That's the way it is."

MARCELLUS HALL

Davis and Evans were an unlikely pair. The trumpeter, born Miles Dewey Davis III, in 1926, was raised in an upper-class black family in East St. Louis. His mother was an idle beauty and his father a successful dentist who came to own a two-hundred-acre farm in Illinois. Never shy, Davis

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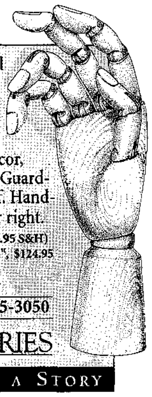

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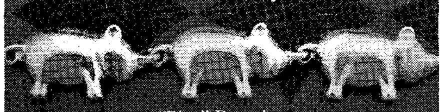

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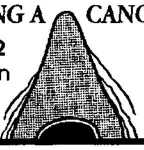

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came to New York in 1944, and, though still a tentative player, was soon appearing on Fifty-second Street with Charlie Parker and Coleman Hawkins. Evans arrived in New York from California two years later to work as an arranger for Claude Thornhill. His background was mysterious. He was a late child, born in Toronto, in 1912, of Scotch-Irish stock. He once said that his father had been a gambler and that his mother, a tiny woman, "carried a mandolin with her." He also said, "She played folk music. I think they came from Calcutta. They were married in Australia. They moved to Jersey. Then they moved to Canada." His mother, a cook and nursemaid, brought him up in Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Montana, and Stockton, California.

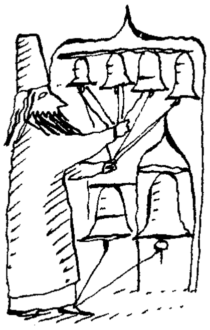
When he arrived in the city, Evans immediately rented a big one-room apartment behind a Chinese laundry on West Fifty-fifth Street, and it became a come-as-you-are salon for such brilliant Young Turks of the time as Parker, Davis, Bud Powell, Gerry Mulligan, John Lewis, Lee Konitz, and Max Roach. Evans, already in his mid-thirties, became the hub of the Fifty-fifth Street salon, and certainly helped to bring into being the nonet that recorded the celebrated "Birth of the Cool" sides in 1949 and 1950. The nonet, made up mainly of salon members, including Davis, was in essence a miniature version of the revolutionary Thornhill band and the acorn out of which the Columbia Davis-Evans sessions grew.

Davis and Evans did not work together again for seven years. Davis went through the first of the druggie times that plagued his life, and Evans drifted into freelance arranging, mostly for vocalists. In 1954, Davis, back on track, recorded two long knockout blues (each took up one side of a ten-inch LP), "Walkin'," and "Blue 'n' Boogie," and a year later he made a sensational unscheduled appearance with an all-star pickup group at the second Newport Jazz Festival. Because of this, George Avakian signed him for Columbia Records, and a year or so later he began thinking about Davis and Evans's collaboration on the nonet sides and about the luxuriant airborne arrangements that Evans had done for Thornhill. And he began thinking about Davis's stark lyricism on "Walkin'" and his startling Newport outing. Visions generally start as questions: Why not let Davis and Evans expand what they had begun in the "Birth of the Cool" sessions?

Here is what Evans once said about Davis and himself: "[Miles and I] happened to have the same kind of an ear for sound, a certain sound. I could appreciate his sound, and he could appreciate my sound in the orchestra. There was a certain emotional connection. . . . When he first started out, he didn't have the sound he had eventually. You fill it in. You breathe harder into it. You fill the horn up. . . . It was like it needed to have more flesh and blood to it. It was very stark at the beginning. . . . Later he had more of the melancholy cry that he wanted to get." (Some of the quotes used in this piece, and much of Evans's early background material, were gathered by Gene Lees for his *Jazzletter*.) In an interview done with Ben Sidran not long before his death, in 1988, Evans said of his arrangements, "They're all melancholy. That's one of my characteristics." Sidran replied, "Miles is the voice of melancholy," and Evans continued, "[His] sound is the thing that put us together."

The music Evans and Davis created is unique and largely unclassifiable. Columbia allowed Evans to put together an eighteen-piece band that included five trumpets, four trombones, two French horns, a tuba, two woodwinds, two saxophones, and bass and drums. It *is* an expansion of the Thornhill band, which Evans once described to Nat Hentoff this way: "The sound of the band was almost a reduction to an inactivity of music, to a stillness. Everything—melody, harmony, rhythm—was moving at minimum speed. The melody was very slow, static; the rhythm was nothing much faster than quarter notes and a minimum of syncopation. Everything was lowered to create a sound, and nothing was to be used to distract from that sound. The sound hung like a cloud."

But Davis and Evans's music is richer and deeper and more subtle. It seemed in the late fifties like a new music, a high-class concertized jazz that belonged in the echoing arena where Paul Whiteman had once held forth and where you could still hear the huge, glistening sarabandes of Stan Kenton. More than that, it was an ineffably cool music that caught the current *angst* of Camus and Kerouac and the dying Billie Holiday. It reached its sad hands out to the listening public and, at the same time, it wowed the critics. It is full of metaphor, this music, and it is almost visual. The brocade curtains of Debussy and Ravel, and even Berlioz, keep opening and closing in it, and there are glimpses of the Fauves and of the pleasingly warring interiors of early Vuillard. It is November music, but it is never bleak; the trees may be bare, but they are beautiful, baroque trees. Most important, it is autobiographical music. The emotions raised by Evans's scores—his flutes and clarinets sliding around his tuba, his flutes in the foreground and his horns and trombones in the far distance, his tuba balanced on his horns—and by Davis, who is, of course, the only soloist on all the albums, are almost embarrassingly intimate. Most of the emotions triggered by the best jazz are abstract: the hair stands up on your neck, and you shiver a little. But Davis, fed by Evans, is telling you, in his monosyllabic way and with his long, vibratoless notes, about his life, about how sad it has been, about how he pities himself. He is not telling you how hard it is to be black; he is telling you how hard it is to be Davis, and Evans, constantly underneath and around, never stops nodding, "Yes, yes. That's the way it is." So listen on the "Miles Ahead" album to "The Maids of Cadiz" and "My Ship" and "The Meaning of the Blues," and on "Porgy and Bess" to "Gone, Gone, Gone" and "Prayer (Oh Doctor Jesus)," which builds into an extraordinary chant. And, since so much Spanish music has a melancholy face, listen to all of "Sketches of Spain." To be sure, the music occasionally goes into tempo, the drummer plays an afterbeat on his snare rims, Davis grows heated, and we move into a politely swinging jazz drawing room. This happens in "Miles Ahead" and "Springsville" and "The Duke," in the first album, and, on "Porgy and Bess," on "Buzzard Song" and "Gone" and "Summertime" and "There's a Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York." After all, the Davis-Evans music is closed and complete, with jazz ticking away far inside it. Pale versions of it still turn up on soundtracks, but it is a music of ecstasy, and Evans took it—harmonically, instrumentally, coloristically—as far as it could go.



For whatever reasons, Duke Ellington is rarely mentioned in connection with Evans. But Evans grew sidewise out of Ellington (and Billy Strayhorn), simply adding timbral depth and harmonic outbuildings with his woodwinds and horns and tubas—instruments that Ellington never felt the need of. The Davis-Evans Columbia albums were a kind of musical love match, and the two men behaved very differently on their own. Davis went on to lead a series of exhilarating small bands, and Evans made several albums on his own that are full of swing and drive and invention. (Both men, though, got lost in the jangling fog of electronic music in their last years.) Most impressive of Evans's non-Davis outings are two albums called "New Bottle, Old Wine" and "Great Jazz Standards." (They are scheduled for reissue on two Pacific Jazz CDs sometime in the next six months.) Evans remakes fifteen jazz classics in his own image, among them "St. Louis Blues," Jelly Roll Morton's "King Porter Stomp," Fats Waller's "Willow Tree," Lester Young's "Lester Leaps In," Thelonious Monk's " 'Round Midnight," John Lewis's "Django," and Don Redman's "Chant of the Weed." He uses Johnny Coles and Steve Lacy and Jimmy Cleveland as soloists, and he plays piano—real arranger's piano, loose and full of unexpected corners. Also impressive is "The Individualism of Gil Evans," on a Verve CD. In the somewhat ramshackle but *misterioso* "Hotel Me," he uses, consciously or unconsciously, the same descending four-note tremolo that is at the heart of Joe Marsala's eerie 1941 recording "Lower Register." Evans gives the tremolo to his trombones, and they never get it quite right, but it doesn't matter: the effect is much the same. There is also a meandering blues on the CD—Willie Dixon's "Spoonful." Thad Jones plays a long, dancing, singing trumpet solo on it that makes one wonder what the Columbia albums would have been like with Jones, a masterly player, in place of Davis, who, in effect, was less an expert instrumentalist than a storyteller and an impressionist—a "sound," as Evans so often put it. ♦

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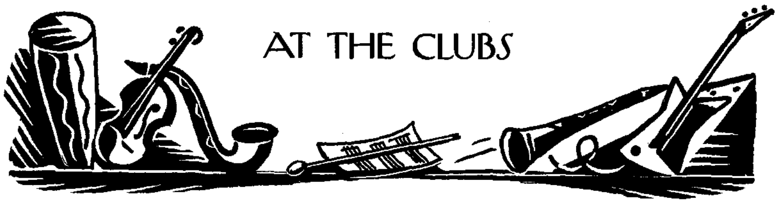

NEW YORK IS JAZZ

Especially after midnight.

BY STANLEY CROUCH

IN the Manhattan jazz night, as one relaxes behind a drink or feels the elevation of a sudden shift in the quality of the improvising, it's easy to understand that Thelonious Monk was pumping nothing but the facts when he said, "Jazz is New York. You can feel it in the air." No other city rises as high in spirit as this town does when the sun goes down; nor is there another as reluctant to let loose its grip on the elation of the swinging groove as the wee hours creep more and more quickly toward the morning light.

Though a premature autopsy of jazz arrives every few years, either because of the deaths of giants or because the business of the music seems down for the count, jazz maintains a startling vitality in New York. This is made possible by the authority of the enduring masters, and by a growing body of young players who know the difference between shuck and shinola. When the elder statesmen of blues and swing are on the bandstand, one can hear nuances continuing to develop within their styles—the styles of musicians whose experience stretches back to the sixties, the fifties, the forties, and the thirties, even (if you're talking about Doc Cheatham) to the twenties and the teens. As is true of all jazz musicians, they come from everywhere: the South, the Southwest, the Midwest, California, and the Pacific Northwest. Some might be college professors, others society types. Always, among them, are a few who echo private memories unknown to the general public. These veterans make the art of the invisible—that is, music—three-dimensional. They convey the music's meaning through their gestures, their speech patterns, their anecdotes, their humor and camaraderie, their elegance, their grasp of romantic frailty, their down-home recollections of the human lore that underlies the swivel and sway of the rhythm, and their acute listening both on and off the bandstand, especially to the various jazz masters to whom they were drawn. Of course, jazz is as much a world of myth as of action. Some of the most enjoyable jazzmen are extraordinary liars, incapable of telling a story in a straight line; they improvise on the facts with the same combination of abstraction, wit, and surprise that they bring to familiar songs.

Playing alongside them is the growing flock of younger musicians, who use the misdeeds of their predecessors as invaluable admonishments, and who cherish the timeless triumphs of the jazz idiom with an unprecedented depth of scholarship so tightly focussed on the processes of art that it doesn't shrivel into the academic. These aspiring musicians represent a renewed seriousness, which distinctively separates what they do from the adolescent anger, sentimentality, empty-headed mating calls, and manipulative smut that define the central inclinations of today's youth culture. By ignoring the dictates of the mass media, they have become the truest rebels in American music, choosing an intricate and difficult discipline that demands courage, patience, and a willingness to cultivate one of the most fertile traditions this century has produced. As it turns out, some of the best of these charismatic upstarts are newcomers from Europe, the Far East, and the Caribbean.

THERE are always two jazz worlds: the formal one and the informal one; the salaried booking and the unexpected event. In the formal situation, you will hear a band doing its job. In the informal one, you will witness the bandstand personnel suddenly expanded by an invitation to a visiting musician who has been asked to sit in; or you will find yourself in a jam session, where anything can happen. Each situation is an important aspect of the jazz world, and sometimes

Myron Walden downtown. The jam session is at once a challenge and a celebration of jazz. Photograph by Anthony Barboza.

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the two scenarios come together in the same place. Both worlds are found in the clubs. Sitting at a table or at the bar, one comes to understand something about the power of jazz and experiences the intimacy of a chamber-music setting. The sheer physical closeness of the listeners contributes to the impact of the music, though that closeness can sometimes give one the feeling of having been born again as a cow jammed in a boxcar on the way to the stockyard. At such times, the cigarette smoke, the ringing cash registers, the sometimes boisterous crowds, the middle-aged groupies, the hostile and drunken musician who blew it long ago, and the bewildered but stubborn tourist who has the seat you want most—all become no more than gargoyles decorating gutbucket cathedrals of jazz.

Bradley's, on University Place, in Greenwich Village, is always the last stop for those who need just a little more music. The club is usually packed, and, as often as not, many musicians are in there learnedly assessing the proceedings—deadpan in some cases, while others call out chordal substitutions as they go by. Bradley Cunningham, the club's namesake, was a big guy with a nose pitted and made red by demon rum. He possessed an oblique sense of humor and loved to hunch over the piano after hours, playing Monk tunes and saying that Monk's bridges (the middle sections of his songs) were so well conceived that he could have become a billionaire in the construction business. Bradley is gone now, and his widow, Wendy, has opened up the piano-and-bass format so you can hear small groups, complete with drums. There is little in New York as exciting as the unplanned jam sessions that erupt at Bradley's during the midnight second set or some time well into the third, and final, set, at 2 A.M.

The jam session is at once a challenge and a celebration of jazz. It's a testing ground where a musician shows off the fruits of his homework. In the old days, jam sessions were after-work events that either took place in private when the doors were closed to the public or were Monday-night features built around a house rhythm section made up of piano, bass, and drums. They were also known as "cutting sessions," in which musicians had duels of the imagination, attempting to best one another as they went through all the musical keys, testing themselves on the most difficult tunes. The sessions were outgrowths of the brass-band competitions that took place in the late nineteenth century. Later, in the thirties and forties, the bigs bands engaged in "battles of music," pulling out their best arrangements and featuring their strongest improvisers, with the response of the dancers determining who'd won.

As hot as those big-band battles became, the stripped-down circumstances of the after-hours sessions were just as important to the craft and the fun. Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Lester Young, Don Byas, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and other titans added to their mythic status in jam sessions that might last until noon the following day. When they were coming up in their careers, these musicians were challengers, seeking to learn and build their reputations; when they became champions they had to defend their crowns. The young Armstrong, innovation seeping out of his pores, would manhandle trumpet players from one end of the country to the other, his stamina and invention putting them in their place. Bechet and Hawkins locked horns one New York night in the twenties, and when Hawkins tried to sneak out, knowing that he could not match his opponent, Bechet followed him into the street blowing blues notes at his backside like hot rivets. After Hawkins had become king of the tenor saxophone, he met Young in Kansas City during the early thirties and got his reputation bent, only to take his revenge years later in Harlem. Eldridge, as combative as a fighting cock and not much larger, was a jam-session terror who never failed to go for the jugular; legend has it that he was brought to tears one night when he was bested by Gillespie. Parker loved to jam so much that he would miss his own gig to take on another saxophonist on Fifty-second Street during New York's golden age.

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In such jam sessions, the fundamentals and subtleties of art were passed on. Equally important was the jam session in which the real goal was joy. Musicians then wanted only to get together, free of commercial dictates, and stretch out.

THAT'S the kind of jamming that takes place at Bradley's. You might walk in one evening and find Branford Marsalis leaning against the piano in baseball cap and athletic gear, the tenor in hypnotic action as James Williams, a major source of information for younger musicians, supplies the apex of a rhythmic triangle that includes the bassist Bob Hurst and the drummer Tony Reedus. The visiting Chicago wonder Von Freeman will fill up the place with *his* tenor sound and invite one younger player after another to take him on. Roy Hargrove might arrive, hot to play his horn, the way he was one evening when the rhythm section of Donald Brown, Ira Coleman, and Yoron Israel was inspiring Donald Harrison to handle the alto like a young lord at the edge of a vast inheritance. Vincent Herring might invite Wynton Marsalis to play, and he might be followed by George Coleman, and the outcome will be a scalding succession of inventions so hot that Harold Mabern rises from his seat and moves to the piano bench.

I remember well a couple of jam sessions I heard at Bradley's. Marcus Belgrave was in town, and was performing at the piano with his fellow-Detroiter Kirk Lightsey and the bassist Cecil McBee. I went down there three times. The first night, Marsalis was there, and the smoking lamp was lit. The following night, Belgrave, Lightsey, and McBee were providing such mellow lessons in harmony that James Newton and Rod Williams were appreciatively discussing major sevenths and raised fifths and sixths. The next night, Marsalis was called to action by Belgrave, who phoned him at 2 A.M. and asked him to come down for the closing. The joint was packed, and the two inspired each other phrase by phrase. Then some tenor player started blowing, sounding good, and the wonderful veteran singer Teri Thornton came to the microphone for one of those occasions when it seems that all the music has been marshalled into one line, moving like the full moon behind a cloud bank, redefining light and darkness, form and texture. There was a roar from the house when she finished singing, and that roar is somehow part of the bittersweet song that is always the tale of the best Manhattan jazz nights. ♦

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PAIN IN MY HEART

BY NICK HORNBY

There is an old R. & B. song that goes "I'd rather be blind, crippled, and crazy / Somewhere pushing up a daisy / Than to let you break my heart all over again." I used to love this song. I would listen to it uncritically, admiring the singer—the late, great, and unjustly obscure O. V. Wright, who often seemed to have left his false teeth behind on recording days but who could build up a pretty terrifying head of steam despite the whistling noise—and the arrangement and all the other things that pious white twenty-somethings are supposed to admire when they listen to R. & B. songs. But then an overanalytical and less impressionable friend killed it for me.

"Why does he have to be blind, crippled, crazy, *and* dead?"

"How do you mean?"

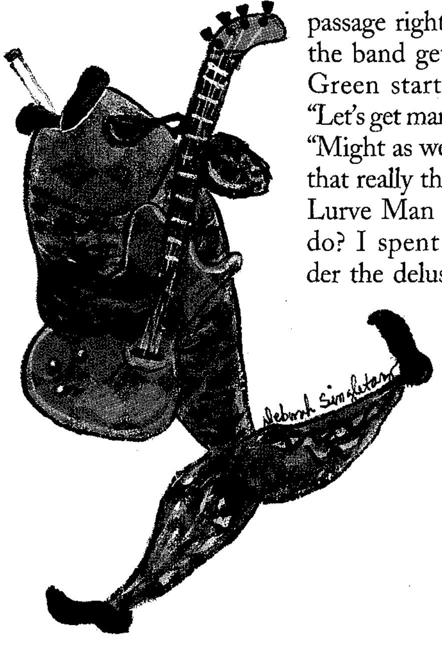
"Well, surely just being dead would get the job done. Blind, crippled, and crazy? I don't know. It just seems a bit . . . de trop."

I couldn't believe it. He was poking fun at a soul singer! These guys had more or less invented pain and suffering, and if O. V. Wright claimed that he needed to be a corpse with three handicaps I was willing to take his word for it. Had I been duped? Was it really possible that R. & B. could be funny—and, what's more, *inadvertently* funny?

I dismissed the notion from my mind. R. & B. was always much too important to me to be funny in that way. (It was allowed to be fun, of course, but fun is different. With fun, you laugh when you're told to, and not before.) When you are younger, and you have no taste, you are vaguely aware that a lot of the rock music you cherish with a po-faced devotion is going to turn out to be utterly ludicrous one day. But R. & B. deals with sex, pain, loss, love—things that should remain serious well into your thirties, maybe even beyond.

But then, sometime later, I was listening to Wright singing "That's How Strong My Love Is" and I experienced a similar sensation. You might not recall Otis Redding's better-known cover of the song as being particularly hilarious, but in Wright's hands it became something of a comic tour de force. "If I were a fish that had been cast upon the land," he laments, "I would stay there if you would let me hold your hand."

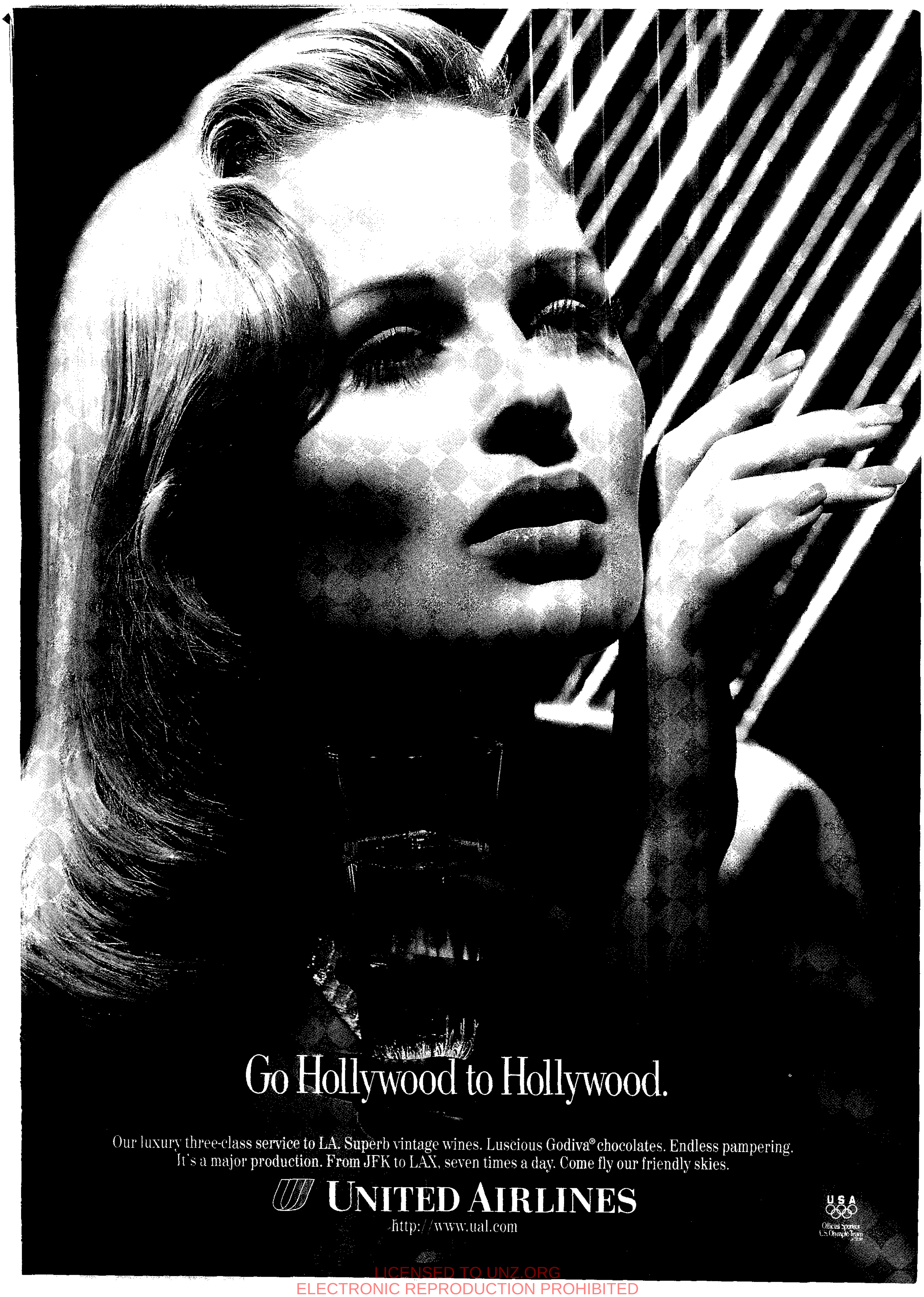
Now, even I had to admit that this couplet doesn't work. The whole fish/hand thing is a real problem—the only mental picture one can paint is desperately surreal, not desperately romantic—and one would have thought that the best way to deal with the line was to get the hell out of it as quickly as possible. But Wright doesn't see it that way. He compounds the problem by ad-libbing after the first "if" clause (why does he always come unstuck on the conditionals?), so that his version goes like this: "If I were a fish—*and this is a bad situation to be in*—that had been cast upon the land . . ." Pointing out the discomfort of being a fish out of water adds little to Wright's rendition; in fact, this time there is no way around it. Snorting, derisive laughter is the only proper response.



DEBORAH SINGLETARY

Once I'd recognized the absurdity of this fish lyric, the scales began to fall from my eyes. James Brown's "Good God"s started to get a little grating. Otis Redding's insistence on slipping the word "good" into Sam Cooke's gentle, cute "Wonderful World"—"Don't know what a good slide rule is for," "Don't know much about the good French I took"—only proved to me that testifying isn't appropriate to every circumstance. Al Green's "Let's Get Married" is a beautiful song that hits all the buttons the title demands—until, that is, the little passage right near the end, when the band gets into a groove and Green starts noodling around. "Let's get married today," he pleads. "Might as well." *Might as well*? Is that really the best that the No. 1 Lurve Man of the seventies can do? I spent years laboring under the delusion that copying Al Green's every move would be my passport to sexual Nirvana, but "Might as well" isn't going to get anyone very far, especially if you don't much look or sound like Al Green in the first place.

What worried me most about O. V. Wright and his fish, though, was that it could set me on a terrible, dark, gloomy road leading all the way to classical music—which, famously, isn't funny at all, ever. I've still got just about enough joke-free music to keep me going, but if anyone happens to find something funny in any songs by the blues singer Robert Johnson ("Hellhound on My Trail," or "Stones in My Passway," which Greil Marcus described as "a two-minute image of doom"), please, could you keep it to yourself? I don't want to hear about it. ◆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